

Fekra

*A Collection of Facebook Posts on
Family, Friends & Others!*



By:

Yousuf Azim Siddiqi

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Preface

In July 2007, I was introduced to Facebook. In the initial months and years, my activity was limited to sharing pictures, updates, and funny videos. However, over the number of years, I found it is a very useful platform to share thoughts and register my feelings in writing.

Unfortunately, many relatives and family friends passed away and I found Facebook to be the right place to express my gratitude to their personalities. In fact, one of my family friends even said: “*whenever we open Yousuf’s Facebook page we find an obituary*”. This compelled me to share some personal but funny stuff, like cats, hens, rats and even Shawarma.

Now I have gathered all the posts in one single book which will be easy to read and access. The 60-odd posts were divided into three parts: i) *Family & People* which covers all posts related to family members and closed acquaintances, ii) *Light on Mind* which covers things easy to digest and mainly are of humours nature, and iii) *Serious Stuff* as the name suggests – these posts are either political, religious or social which are thought-provoking but still written down in non-academic style.

Happy Reading

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Family & People

My Ancestors

We, human beings, always cherish our old memories because they connect us to our own and real identity. But when we search about our ancestors, then it could be a moment of pride to know that we are offspring of great people. HOWEVER, this calls for a bigger responsibility to continue the legacy they passed it to us.

Our elders always blame the youngsters (=netizen, Generation Z) that they know nothing about family ties. This could be a fact! But the reality is that they were not told about the family trees and the legacy they need to carry forward.

I just thought to pen down my connection to some of the great men so that my niece, nephews and more importantly my daughter will know that it becomes a personal responsibility and ethical duty to carry the great mission left by My Ancestors.

The Prophet Adam (AS)

As Muslims, we believe that ALL human beings are the progeny of Adam (Ādam) and Eve (Ḥawā). The first human

being was Adam who was created to carry the message of Allah on earth. He started his life in Jannah but then was sent down to the planet Earth. This what we believe, as Muslims, based on several Quranic verses. So, all human beings, good or bad, belong to the same person who is a prophet and certainly a pious person. I have no documented lineage to the Prophet Adam, but I believe in it as I have Quranic verses supporting it.

The Prophet Nūḥ (AS)

As Muslims, we believe that there is a massive flood that hit the planet many centuries back when human life just started on the planet. All those who did not believe in the Prophet Nūḥ (AS) drowned and only his believers were left. The Quran further reveals that only the progeny of the Prophet Nūḥ continued. That's why some historians refer to Nūḥ as the Second Adam. Hence, all human beings who are living on this planet are decedents of the same person who was, again, a prophet and a dedicated preacher. I have no documented lineage to the Prophet Nūḥ, but I believe in it as I have Quranic verses supporting it.

The Prophet Ibrahīm and Ismail

It is transmitted over many centuries that long back my ancestors came to India from Madinah. They belonged to Quraysh tribe which traced its lineage to The Prophet Ibrahīm and his elder son Ismail. Ibrahīm sacrificed a lot to spread the message of Allah firstly in Iraq and, then, Palestine. When his son Ismail was in the toddler stage, so the Prophet Ibrahim left, on the command of Allah, his wife, Hajar, and their son in Makkah which was a barren land surrounded by mountains with no urban or rural settlement. The Prophet

Ibrahim came back after few years and built Kaba as a symbol of monotheism on the earth. The Prophet Ismail got married to a lady from the tribe Jarham and later Quraysh tribe flourished from this progeny. I have no documented lineage to both the prophets, but I believe in it based on widespread acceptance among the Muslim families in India that we belong to Arab lands.

Abū Bakar Ṣiddīq (RA) (d. 634)

I belong to Ṣiddīqi family, so it is known among Muslims in India that we are decedents of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)'s the most special companion. He was born in Makkah and was 2 years junior to the Prophet. He was the first man to embrace Islam and was second to Khadija (Prophet's wife) among mankind. He had an unparalleled contribution to Islam by supporting the Prophet via putting his life, family and wealth at the service of Allah's mission. It is said that Ṣiddīqi in north India is decedents of Abū Bakar Ṣiddīq's son Muḥammad. I know that I am the son of Aleem Ahmad s/o Azim Ahmad s/o Aziz Ahmad s/o Anwar Ali s/o Akbar Ali. I have no documented lineage from Akbar Ali to Abū Bakar, but Muslim families in India never disputed this fact for our family.

Shah Abd al-Razzaq Bansawi (d. 1627)

He was a pious man who was born in Rasulpur near Mahmudabad (nowadays in the district of Daryabad near Barabanki (UP)). He spread the message of Islamic spirituality among his followers and great scholars, like Nizam al-Dīn Firangi Mahali, were among his disciples. He passed away in Shawal 1036H which corresponds July 1627. One of the finest references on the decedents of him is a book

written in Urdu by Janab Said al-Hasan Razaqi, who was a senior member of my mother's family and paternal grandfather of Salman Razzaqi. Also, recently Arif Mushtaq Kidwai Sb. wrote a book in Urdu which gives details of different Muslim families in North India. I referred to both the books. My mother's paternal grandmother (Munir al-Nisa) and my maternal grandmother (Zakiya Khatun) were direct decedents of Shah Sb. My lineage to Shah Sb is as follows: my mother (Naheed Siddiqi) d/o Anwār Allah s/o Munir al-Nisa d/o Sheikh Husain Ahmad s/o Sheikh Inayat Ali s/o Muhammad Ali s/o Ramzani Bi Bi d/o Syed Karam Ali s/o Ghulam Dust Muhmad s/o Shah Abd al-Razzaq Bansawī. So, effectively, I am on the 9th generation of this pious person. Many of my relatives with the same ancestors are based in India, Pakistan, US and Australia.

Hamd Allah from Sandila (d. 1650)

He was a renowned scholar who was born and raised in Sandila (UP). He belonged to Siddiqi family. He benefited from the tutelage of Nizam al-Din Firangi Mahali. He contributed to the science of logic by teaching and writing. He left behind some finest commentaries in this field. The Mughal King, Ahmad Shah, gave him the title of Fazal Allah Khan and several plots of land. He constructed a big seminary in his hometown. He passed away in Delhi in 1650. My father's paternal grandmother (Aiysha Bibi) was a direct decedent of Hamd Allah Sandilwi. In 1986, Janab Yaqeen Ahmad Hashmi (father of Fahim Hashmi) came up with an Urdu book on the family trees of Sandila. It was a huge contribution to the family history of this town. The book needs to be republished through English abridgment and correction of earlier errors. My lineage to Hamad Allah is as

follows: my father (Aleem Ahmad) s/o Dr. Azim Ahmad s/o Aysha Bi Bi d/o Hasan Ali s/o Luṭf Ali s/o Şāliḥa Bibi d/o Risalat Bibi d/o Aṭhar Ali s/o Akbar Ali s/o Ḥamd Allah Sandaiwli.

Mullah Jiwan

He was a known scholar who was born in Amethi (UP) in 1638. Some historians said that he was a descendent of Prophet Şāliḥ, and some claimed that he was Siddiqi. He traveled to several places in order to seek Islamic knowledge. He was close to the Mughal Emperor Farrukhsiyar. He left behind many books and the most famous book is Tafsir Ahmadi which was recently re-published in Pakistan. He passed away in Delhi in 1718 and is buried in his hometown. I was told that my father's maternal grandmother (Umm Salma Bi) was the granddaughter of Mullah Jiwan but I have no documented lineage to support that.

Janab Mustafa Ahmad Siddiqui

Founder of Mustafa Manzil

Many of my relatives in different parts of the world (nephews, grandsons, cousins) have heard about Mustafa Manzil. They were told by their parents or grandparents that how lovely, lively and traditional was the place called Mustafa Manzil. Even they were given a pinch of advice to continue the legacy of its first generation.

I decided to write 2 blogs about Mustafa Manzil. In this blog I will talk about its founder. In the next blog I will talk about the first generation of Mustafa Manzil.

Geographically, Mustafa Manzil is situated in old Lucknow (India). The area is known as Katra Abu Turab Khan. Although a part of extension falls in Qazi Bagh area. If you are in Lucknow then you might have to say Raja Bazar, and in front of the park you will find a mansion comprising of 3 different and large houses. On the back side of Mustafa Manzil, there was a small graveyard known as Makka Bagh. Makka is maize (corn) in Urdu.

Historically, Mustafa Mazil was originally known as Farrash Khana which means the house of carpets. During the time of Nawabs, some portions of the current building were used to store carpets of Baradari over here. Even today, traditional houses of Muslims refer to Mustafa Manzil as Farrash Khana.

Now get introduced to its founder!

It was founded by Janab Mustafa Ahmad Siddiqui Sb. He was named Waris Ali. Later his name was changed to Mustafa Ahmad. He was born in Neotini which is a village in Hasanganj Block in Unnao District of Uttar Pradesh State, which is a small place in north India. His father's name was Abid Ali who was son of Sheikh Akbar Ali. In his childhood days, Mustafa Ahmad Sb. suffered the tragedy of his father's death. His maternal uncle (Nazir Yar Jung) who was a chief justice in Hyderabad took his sister and his orphaned nephew to Hyderabad. Mustafa Ahmad Sb. received his education in Hyderabad and joined public services and by the retirement age he was appointed as Tehsildar which was a position equivalent to the judge of High Court in modern times. Upon retirement, he decided to come back and settle in Lucknow. It was told that he brought One Lakh (i.e. one hundred thousand) rupees with him.

By the time he moved to Lucknow, he was married to Umm Salma (from Amethi (India)) and was father of 7 kids.

His paternal cousin (Aziz Ahmad Siddiqui Sb.) helped to find a house suitable for the family of Mustafa Ahmad Sb. After seeing different locations, it was decided to buy Farrash Khana.

As per the board installed at the main gate of Mustafa Manzil, the date of its foundation is 1333 Hijrah which corresponds to 1914.

As of now there are few relatives of our family who remember seeing Mustafa Ahmad Sb. One of such persons is our uncle (Noor Chacha) who was around 10 years when Mustafa Ahmad Sb. passed away.

According to Noor Chacha, Mustafa Ahmad Sb. was a tall person with fair complexion. Fried eggs were served to him in the morning. He used to eat egg yolks and give away egg white to his young grandchildren who used to accompany him. Once he was done with breakfast then used to come and sit on a long armchair and read the Urdu newspaper called Haqeeqat which was issued under the supervision of his son-in-law Janab Anees Ahmad Abbasi.

According to my father (Jb. Aleem Ahmad Siddiqi), noble and intellectual personalities of old Lucknow used to visit Mustafa Ahmad Sb. One of these notable visitors were Mulana Abdul Haleem Sharar (d. 1924).

Mustafa Ahmad Sb. established Mustafa Manzil and bought a piece of land in the village of Behru in Lucknow.

In the early 1940s, he passed away in Lucknow after suffering a heart decease. He was buried in Aishbagh graveyard in old Lucknow.

He was survived by a wife (Umm Salma), 2 sons and 7 daughters.

The Jewels of Mustafa Manzil

In my last blog, I gave a brief introduction about the life of Mustafa Manzil's founder: Mustafa Ahmad Siddiqui Sb.

In this blog, I will try to share some information about the family of Mustafa Ahmad Sb. I must confess that this blog might sound a bit census-style report, but my aim is to make various members of the family acquainted with each other. While introducing you to the 2nd generation of Mustafa Manzil, I will tag name of one person from the third generation (who is on Facebook).

Mustafa Ahmad Sb. married when he was in Hyderabad (India). After few years, his first wife passed away without delivering any children.

Mustafa Ahmad Sb. got married for the second time to Um Salma Bi from Amethi (India). It is reported that mother of Mustafa Ahmad addressed her newlywed daughter in law and said: "May God give her so many children that she would be surrounded by them". The God was merciful on the old mother's prayer. Mustafa Ahmad Sb. and Umm Salma had 7 daughters and 2 boys. And subsequently they had 65 grandchildren. Masha Allah.

It was not the number which distinguished members of Mustafa Manzil from other Muslim families of Lucknow. However, its members became academically qualified and they turned out to be doctors, engineers, entrepreneurs,

landlords, academicians, politicians, lawyers, corporate professionals and even authors. Members of the family were geographically scattered around the globe. Hence you will find its members, (from west to east) in the USA, Canada, United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, UAE, Oman, India, Pakistan, Malaysia and New Zealand.

These focused careers choices were not possible if Mustafa Manzil did not have strong foundations which are the 9 jewels of Mustafa Manzil. Let's know more about the boys and daughters of Mustafa Ahmad Sb.

Jewel No. 1: Mujtaba Ahmad

He was the eldest son of Mustafa Ahmad Sb. and was born in Hyderabad (India) in 1903. He was known by his nephews as "Mamu Sahab". He was an extra ordinary genius person who received formal education in the traditional medical sciences from the Tibbiya College (Lucknow). Afterwards he went to Aligarh (India) and was the pass out of the first batch of BSc. In the early 1940s, he moved to Saudi Arabia and worked as King Abdul Aziz's Advisor in the Ministry of Agricultural Affairs. Post-independence of India, Mujtaba Sb. returned to India and practiced the medical profession. He married Shamsu Nis Bi who was from Sultanpur (India).

Mujtaba Ahmad Sb. had the following children: Mudassir Ahmad "Assad" (father of Umami Sarah), Yasmeen, Saadia (mother of Saad Siddiqui), Atiya (mother of Atika Mustafa).

Mujtaba Sb. passed away in 1988 in Lucknow and was buried in the graveyard of Aishbagh (Lucknow).

Jewel No. 2: Shakira Banu

She was born in Hyderabad (India). A very soft-spoken lady. She married Anees Ahmad Abbasi Sb. from Kakori (India). Her husband was a known journalist who participated in the struggle of independence along with famous political leaders like Nehru. He was Chief Editor of Urdu newspaper: Haqeeqat which published from Lucknow.

Shakira Bi had the following children: Raees Banu "Sarru" (mother of Taj Alvi), Saeeda Banu (mother of Shahnaz Hasan), Naseem Banu (mother of Fahim Hashmi), Rafea Banu (mother of Urooj Hussein), Kamal Ahmad, Asifa Banu (mother of Ahsan Siddiqui), Hilal Ahmad (father of Faizan Abbasi), Aarifa Banu (mother of Syeda Hena Rasool), Anwar Ahmad, Tasneem Banu (mother of Najia Siddiqui) and Fehmida Banu.

Shakira Bi passed away in Madinah (Saudi Arabia) in 1979 and was buried the famous graveyard of Al Baqee.

Jewel No. 3: Hajira Banu

She was born in Hyderabad (India). A very elegant lady and cool-headed lady with smiling face. Among her sisters, she was the one who resembled her mother (Umm Salma Bibi) a lot. She used to cook excellent food. She had a fair complexion that's why she was called "Meme Sahiba" by her sisters. She married Qari Rasheed in Farooqi Sb. from Banda (India). He was a successful lawyer by profession and a certified Qari (reciter of Quran).

Hajira Bi had the following children: Taiyaba Banu, Iqbal Rasheed "Noor", Aasya Banu, Khalida Banu (mother of Sundus Lodhi), Nihal Rasheed (father of Sabeen Farooqui), Rashida Banu, Jamal Rasheed "Jummi" (father of Saad Jamal Farooqui) and Qudsiya Banu.

Hajira Bi passed away in Karachi (Pakistan) in 1973.

Jewel No. 4: Majida Banu

She was born in Hyderabad (India). In 1935, she contested elections during the British era. Although she could not win but it clearly shows the women empowerment in those days. She married her maternal first cousin Siddique Ahmad Siddiqui Sb. from Palhari (India). Siddique Ahmad Sb. was a successful lawyer who practiced in Bara Banki (India).

Majida Bi had the following children: Mukhlisa “Humeria”, Azra (mother of Ahmed Wasi), Irfana Banu, Sultana (mother of Saba Rehman), Bushra Banu (mother of Lubna Mujeeb Shah), Mohammad Shahabuddin (father of Saboor Ahmed), Shahina “Fizzo” (mother of Maria Habib), Salman and Javed.

Majida Bi passed away in Lucknow in 1973 and was buried in the graveyard of Aishbagh (Lucknow).

Jewel No 5: Rabia Banu

She was born in Hyderabad (India). She was a social lady and was popular among her nephews and nieces as Khala Apa. She married her paternal second cousin Dr. Azim Ahmad Siddiqui from Neotini (India) who was her paternal second cousin as well. Dr. Azim Sb. was a famous physician among the reputed Muslim families of Lucknow.

Rabia Bi had the following children: Sufia Banu “Api” (mother of Fauzia Ahmad), Aleem Ahmad (father of Ahmad Siddiqui), Haleem Ahmad (father of Aasim Siddiqui), Saleem Ahmad (father of Erum Khalid), Wasifa Banu “Wassu” (mother of Tahera Hussain Siddiqui), Kaleem Ahmad (father of Adil Siddiqui), Parveen Banu, Suhaila Banu (mother of Ali Anwar) and Mohammad Shoaib (father of Seemin Kabir).

Rabia Bi passed away in Lucknow in 1986 and was buried in the graveyard of Aishbagh (Lucknow).

Jewel No. 6: Abida Banu

She was born in Hyderabad (India). She was a lady with high family values. She married Hashmat Ali Siddiqui Sb. from Banki (India). He used to work for Indian railways and was posted in New Delhi during 1940s.

Abida Bi had the following children: Asma (mother of Sobia Umair Mujib), Naiyara, Rafat Ali (father of Shujat Ali), Sumaya.

Abida Bi passed away in Lucknow (India) in 1993. She was buried in the graveyard of Aishbagh (Lucknow).

Jewel No. 7 Murtaza Ahmad Sb.

He was born in Lucknow (India). He was a landlord in Behru (India). He was also a practicing homeopathic physician. Besides that he was actively involved in local politics and served over 20 years as Gram Pradhan Of Behru. And for 2 years he was chosen as Block Pramukh Of Kakori. He had close ties with famous scholarly personalities of Lucknow. He married Anisa Khatoon from Rudauli (India).

Murtaza Ahmad Sb. had the following children: Hanifa (mother of Nazrul Abdin), Qamar (father of Haris Mustafa), Najam Mustafa (father of Sana Mustafa), Nasreen "Nassu" (mother of Faiz Hashim), Anjum, Ubaida "Shadan" (mother of Asim Alvi), Aamir (father of Talia Mustafa).

Murtaza Ahmad Sb. passed away in Lucknow (India) in 1983. He was buried in the graveyard of Aishbagh (Lucknow).

Jewel No. 8: Razia Banu Bibi

She was born in Lucknow (India). She was highly qualified and received her undergraduate education at Isabella Thoburn College (Lucknow). Then she went to Aligarh (India) and received her postgraduate education in Urdu literature. She had excellent command over Urdu as well as English. She married Farooq Ahmad Rizwi Sb. from Nagram (India) who was education inspector and served in different parts of north India.

Razia Bi had the following children: Usman Hussein (father of Noora Husain), Kusar Banu, Ali Abdul Haq (father of Mohammed Syed), Zubair Abdul Qadir, Salma Ambar (mother of Hina Siddiqui), Hussein Abdullah and Talha Jalaluddin.

Razia Bi passed away in Shahjahanpur (India) in 1985. She was buried in the graveyard of Aishbagh (Lucknow).

Jewel No. 9: Wajida Banu Bibi

She was born in Lucknow (India). She was the youngest among all her sisters. She used to prepare delicious Lucknow dishes like Kabab and shahi tukde.

She married Abdul Wahab Siddiqui Sb. from Palhari (India) who was a landlord managing land in his native place. Wadija Banu Bibi had 2 sons from Abdul Wahab Sb.: Abdul Mujeeb "Mujju" (father of Samia Mujeeb) and Mohammad Adeeb "Addu" (father of Sameen Adeeb).

Post demise of Abdul Wahab Sb., Wajida Bi married Rafiq Ahmad Rizwi Sb. from Nagram (India). Rafiq Ahmad Sb. was a senior officer at the Government Secretariat (Lucknow). They had the following children: Hassan (father

of Syed Aman), Ghazala (mother of Hamza Syed), Alauddin Babar and Mohammad Khalid.

Wadija Bi passed away in Lucknow in 2009. She was buried in the graveyard of Aishbagh (Lucknow).

Hope we try to continue keep alive the family values of the nine jewels.

Be Connected - Be Loved!

Mr. Aleem Ahmad Siddiqi

My Abba

Same day 19th February but 17 years back, my beloved father (Janab Aleem Ahmad Siddiqi) whom I always called as Abba left this world after a brief illness on the day of his departure.

Usually, family members say we cannot forget the departed souls.

I say I live with my Abba every day.

My Abba was born in Mustafa Manzil (Lucknow-India) in 1939. He was the second child and eldest son of his parents. His father was Dr Azim Ahmad Siddiqi Sb. who was a famous physician in old Lucknow. His mother was Rabiya Banu Bi who was the daughter of Mustaf Ahmad Siddiqui, the founder of Mustafa Manzil.

Abba used to tell me that during his days of childhood he was weak and suffered different illnesses. He was intelligent but not studious. He did his schooling from Shia College. He couldn't get admission to MBBS in King George's Medical College (Lucknow). He opted for B.Sc. Zoology from Lucknow University.

During his college days, he developed an interest in Urdu poetry. His mentor was his brother-in-law Janab Furqat

Kakorwi (father of Suboohi Khalidi), the famous Urdu critic. This ensured that his interest and admiration of anyone's literary work is not immediate and spontaneous. He gave considerable thoughts prior to admiring anyone's poetry or contribution to literature.

He admired Dr Mohammad Iqbal (1878-1938)'s self-confidence in the immortal message of Islam. Some people memorize Kuliyaat Iqbal (collection of Iqbal's poetry). But Abba has images of Iqbal's book in his mind. He could close his eyes and tell us the line which we were trying to find. He used to get annoyed when people define Iqbal with Shikwa (an imaginary poem by Iqbal where a person from the Muslim community is complaining to God). He liked the Godly response in Jawab Shikwa more. Despite his admiration of Iqbal, he was not a blind follower! Sometimes he told me that Iqbal could have been more cautious in choosing words while addressing the Almighty.

He admired Maulana Azad's (1888-1958) vision of united India. He liked his speeches a lot and quoted on a frequent basis. Again, Abba had his own stand but not admiring everything which is Azad! When I gifted him Tazkirah, Abba was not impressed.

He admired the writing style of Sh. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (1914-1999). He used to tell me that Sh. Ali Nadwi chooses the perfect couplet to describe the situation given in his books. On all visits of Sh. Nadwi to Saudi, Abba ensured to pay a visit at Sh. Noorwali's bungalow in Jeddah. He told me very proudly that on the last visit of Sh. Nadwi to Saudi Arabia, he had the privilege of arranging and riding the wheelchair for Sh. Nadwi at Jeddah Airport.

Abba worked with Filaria Department in Barabanki (India), and stayed at Majida Banu Bi's (his maternal aunt) place. He was a caring big brother for all the cousin sisters in the Barabanki house. Till the last days of his life, he always narrated stories of his stay but with great admiration.

After leaving government job, he joined Bombay Dyeing in Delhi and stayed in old Delhi. He had an excellent sense of humour with a poetic touch. Once he told me that his address in Delhi was: "Chamde Wali Gali -Chitli Qabar". He felt awkward writing such a butchery address to Mumbai headquarters of the company. So, he created an English translation of Purani Delhi name. He quoted his address: Leather Lane - Spotted Grave. Interestingly, the postman delivered the letter to him. Surely, he knew that it must be Abba who could commit such a poetic reform. In his Delhi stay, he had a close association with all the members of his senior most cousin (Raees Banu - known as Sarru Baji (mother of Taj Alvi) in the family).

After leaving Bombay Dyeing, he moved to Saudi Arabia in 1974. He tried joining different jobs and eventually started with a commercial company in Jeddah. After a few years, he decided to start his own business. Sadly, that was not a success as he expected, but till the last moment, he was hopeful of his business-turnaround.

My Abba was extremely fortunate to be surrounded with loving family members. Among boys, he was the third senior-most cousin in his paternal and maternal families. His real-brothers used to call him Bade Bhai Jan. Other cousins called him Aleem Bhai. All the siblings showed respect for his caring and visible love.

Again, my Abba was fortunate to have sincere and self-less friends. In his Lucknow days, he had the Late Saad-u-Din Sb, Rafat Ahmad Sb., Brigadier Zafar Ahmad Sb. In Jeddah, he had many friends. But importantly, his Saudi sponsor (Mohammad Naseem) always sported my Abba's desire to excel in business.

Abba's faith was unshakable. He sent his three sons to Arabic schools when many people considered the idea as suicidal. He just wanted us to learn reading Arabic, so our Aaqida (creed) and Zaban (linguistic abilities) are strong. He never considered Arabic as a source of income. He was fulfilling his wife's dream when she saw Sh. Nadwi addressing Arabs in Makkah in the Arabic language on Saudi TV. He was content that his sons will learn English once they reach India after completing their 12 years of education in Arabic medium. He was a Majzoob by-heart.

He left us on 19th February 2002 in Jeddah. He was 63 at that time. On his last breath, his wife and his eldest son (Ahmad Siddiqi) were near him. The other sons were in Pune. His funeral prayer was performed in Makkah's Holy Shrine. It was the 8th Day of the Month of Hajj. I was told his coffin was rolling on the shoulders of pilgrims who might have not known who my Abba was, but they must have an inner feeling to pay respect for a man who had faith in a world full of material. My brother told me, the Holy Shrine was flooded with pilgrims, so his body was kept, prior to funeral prayers, in the open area of Kab'a (known as Hateem). We believe it was a reward for a physically weak man who might have not performed prayers in Hateem when he was living in this world where stronger grabs his place even in holy places. He was buried in the Graveyard of Adal near the Mount of Noor.

I had the privilege to collect his Urdu writings and publish it under the name of Naqsh Alimi.

Finally - I do not remember Abba but I live with his values, stories, dreams and hopefully one day with his unshakable faith on God!

His Beta

Mrs. Naheed Aleem Siddiqui

My Amma

We live in a world where we look at stars with admiration, but we forget to even consider the beauty of the planet we are living in it. Same as we admire about legends, we hear about them from others, but we forget to look at great people whom we saw at different crossroads of our lives.

I thought of this and decided to write about legends I met in my life so far. They might be simple people but had the courage to fight the different odds of their lives and stand up against the challenges. I wish this would be a good learning lesson for the readers to look at legends moving in simple but great characters.

Let's start with my Amma.

My Amma, Naheed Siddiqui, was born on 17th July 1944 in Aurangabad (now Maharashtra). Her great-grand father (Naeem-ullah Siddiqui) moved from Banki (a town near Barabanki of Lucknow) to Aurangabad to benefit from the prosperity of Nizam's sultanate. My mother's father (Anwar-ullah Siddiqui) was principal in a school at the time of my mother's birth.

At the time of Police Action (i.e. annexation of Hyderabad to India) in September 1948, my mother moved with her family to Muminabad. After that, my mother moved to Hyderabad

where she joined Rosary Convent High School and completed her schooling up to the 3rd standard. Then her father was relocated to Basmathnagar which has a lot of scorpions in the accommodation given to the family. Then her father moved to Armoor and my mother had no school for more than 2 years but learned basic Telugu language which she remembers even after passage of half a century. She had to go through home-schooling. Then my mother moved to Latur (Maharashtra) where my grandfather brought for her AMU's external syllabus of Matric (=10th Standard). Eventually, my grandfather moved to Bhiwandi and my mother joined Raees School for 6 months. Finally, my grandfather (Born 1903) approached retirement age and moved to Pune (then Poona) and my mother joined Anglo Urdu High School and completed her SSC (=12th Standard). Then, my mother joined Nowrosjee Wadia College (Pune) under Special Graduation in Economics. In 1965, she graduated in BA (Hon) in Economics.

This snake-and-ladder journey of schooling seems to be very usual to families of government servants in those days. However, what made my mother emerge as a legend, in her urge to learn and gain knowledge, is not giving up due to difficult odds of strange schools and environmental shocks. Kids nowadays complain about luxury and minute facilities of the school. Imagine, daughter of a principal is not going to school or had to learn a language which is as good as Greek. My grandparents were happy about her education but with limits. Upon her Matric and then SCC they pushed for getting her married and even considered overseas proposals. My mother never gave up and got the support from her grandmother (Muneerun Nisaa Razzaqi) who extended her support after migrating to Pakistan. She was short with fair

skin and no knowledge of English. But she had a towering character who ensured that, as her 4 sons, her granddaughter should receive the required modern education.

On the Women's Day – this is my short introduction to these two legends.

Eng. Ahmad Viquar Siddiqi

My Bhai

I wrote 3 blogs on “Legends I Saw/See”. The first one was on my Amma, followed by a blog on Bade Abba and then Asif Phupa.

Today marks the 48th birthday of my Big B (Ahmad Viquar Siddiqi) So I thought no better chance, then write a blog about the legendary aspects of his life.

He was born to Janab Aleem Ahmad Siddiqi and Mrs. Naheed Siddiqi on 30th August 1972 in his ancestral house Mustafa Manzil in Lucknow (India). A pair of twin brothers (Hasan and Hussain) came before him to the world but left in their early days of life. He had a younger brother, Haroon, who even could not survive after 3 months when treated with an overdose of medication. He had a maternal cousin, Shiraz Khalil, who passed away when he was four. With all these tragedies, Bhai was looked at as a bundle of joy and a ray of hope especially by his grandmother, Begum Rabiya Banu, and his paternal aunts and uncles in Lucknow. When he was a year old, so he moved with my parents to old Delhi and spent a few months at Chitli Qabar house. Eventually, in 1974, my father moved to Jeddah for better job prospects. After 2 years, my mother and my Bhai joined him. He was four when he landed for the first time at Dhahran airport on Pan America flight. The life in Jeddah was different from

today. Apartments were shabby and non-engineered. No places to have fun. He was the only child among people who were of his parent's age group. Still, he always maintained a relationship of benefiting from their experiences and be their kid of choice. He used to call Asif Phupa as Nana.

When it came to education, my parents preferred to send the kids to Arabic medium schools rather than the Indian Embassy, which were English medium. He was sent to Rawdat Al Maarif Schools (Jeddah). That was challenging for him. Still, he accepted that challenge open-heartedly. Non-Arabs were rare in Arabic schools. Further, names like Viqar could be an odd name to be recognized by Arabs of Gulf. Interestingly, he preferred to have a nickname of Faysal. The responsibility of learning Arabic and getting yourself accustomed to Indo-Arab cultures was not confined to him. In the coming years, he had to nurture the mind and craft the path for his younger brother, Abdullah Siddiqi, whom I call Bhaijan. My Bhai did not only survive the challenge, but he made sure that his younger brother can rely on the excellent reputation of Ahmad Viqar from India. In 1988, when my father started facing financial problems, so I had to start my schooling! It was difficult to afford fees of three kids going to a private school. Again, my Bhai accepted another challenge to move to a public school called Usman Ibn Affan (Jeddah). The school was different from his previous private school, which was dominated by Palestinian and Egyptian management and teaching staff. In the new school, the dominance was of Saudi nationals. Besides the cultural difference, he had to opt with credit hours system, which was implemented for the first year in Saudi Arabia. Making the table was a tricky thing, but father and son could manage it. The assistance he received from a Saudi teacher who used to

teach English was inevitable. He scored 93% in the discipline of Science. Plans were made to send him to Turkey and join Engineering after learning the Turkish language. Suddenly, a neighbour from Bangalore, Dr. Ashfaq, visited us and suggested to my father to send my Bhai to Bangalore. He joins Engineering programme. Imagine studying all the science subjects in Arabic, where sin, cos, tan are called *jaa*, *jata*, *zaa*, and you need to join a full-fledged engineering program in the engineering city of India. He joined Ghosia College of Engineering which had, at that time, only one favourite thing to be known outside its location. Its location! It was situated in the same village where the movie Sholay was shot when my Bhai was 3 years old. The location was far away from Bangalore with limited infrastructural support. It was a call for his endurance system to reboot when he landed in Jeddah.

Further, my father had financial constraints, but my Bhai could survive on rationalized pocket money and had the biggest outing to walk on the MG Road of Bangalore. Again he continued to think how his younger brother will move to India educational system when he completes his schooling within the coming 3-4 years. He got Brilliant Tutorial's material from Madras to prepare Bhaijan for IIT. Indians always admired IIT and AIMS as dream educational destinations for their kids. It was a dream far ahead to be thought off. Still, as a guiding brother, he preferred to iron out the challenges. Interestingly, his dream came through, and Bhaijan joined IIT Delhi.

In 1995, he returned to Saudi after securing his degree of BE (Civil Engineering). Firstly, he thought to do MBA from Cyprus but then preferred to support his family. The joy of

his first weekly pay of SAR 270 was beyond words. Some hard-earned money was seen with bare eyes. I was studying in 9th standard, and I had almost a consistent record of not receiving my mark sheets on time. Reason? Pending fees. When Bhai joined the job, so he ensured that for the remaining 4 years of schooling, I shall receive my mid-term and final-term mark-sheets on time. He joined SETE (Jeddah) as Tendering & Project Support Engineer in June 1996. He resigned in June 2013 as Head Of Planning & Control Department. He moved to SNC Lavalin, Jacobs, SETE (Jeddah), and now back to SNC Lavalin.

He always had a passion for learning and educating himself. When I was a kid, so I could see the best Arabic references of Islamic history available at our house. We were introduced to the encyclopaedias of Munjid and Mawrid at our childhood when university graduates remain unaware of these excellent references. He made us watch Treasure Island (in Arabic) and love the polished Arabic dialogues rather than foolishness of Captain Majid. The house was stacked with volumes of Majid magazine, which made us aware of the Arab world before we could understand how to ride our cycle. This passion for learning never stopped him from receiving Project Management certification besides getting an MBA from DePaul University. Needless to say that his wife (Umema Siddiqi) Bhabhi and kids (Zaid Siddiqi and Mansoor) cooperated a lot when he lived in two different places and had to study a management degree which demands a lot of time and dedication.

Bhai remains a caring brother who feels proud to ease the challenges faced by his younger brothers and seeing them on

comfy paths not walked by him. He silently helps those in need but hates spending any money on himself.

Eng. Abdullah Siddiqi

My Bhaijaan

Today is 9th September which happens to be the 42nd birthday of my elder brother, as I fondly call him Bhaijaan. No better opportunity to share some of my experiences with him over a period exceeding a quarter-century.

He was born to Janab Aleem Ahmad Siddiqi and Naheed Siddiqi on 9th September 1977 in his ancestral house: Mustafa Manzil situated Katra Abu Turab Khan. Few years before his birth, my mother, and my elder brother (Ahmad Siddiqi) moved to Jeddah permanently. However, in those days, Jeddah lacked lady gynaecologists. Hence, my mother decided to deliver her baby in Lucknow. My grandmother Rabia Banu took care of my mother, and the boy was born in a month which is usually described as “Sitam-gar”. Very soon, my brother was infected with jaundice and kept under ultraviolet light for a few days. My father wanted to name him Abdullah. My grandmother wanted to have a suffix of Azim after my grandfather’s name. Muhammad is usually added to boys’ name in north India. Hence, the little entrant in the family got three names. As his elder brother was a favourite kid to the paternal side of the family, Bhaijaan gained the title of the prince among the members of the maternal side of the family.

Quickly, my mother reached Jeddah with 2 of her sons. Days passed by, and it was discovered that as my eldest brother was sober and caring whereas Bhaijan had a bunch of ideas and activities to keep the house on its toes whether it was hanging nails in the electric sockets or sleeping when no one is awake.

My entry into his life made him senior to a family of four members. He always had a friendly relationship with his younger brother. My Bhai left Jeddah in 1990, and I was all alone with Bhaijan. Having lived a non-luxurious childhood, we had to manage our Eid pocket money for our daily pleasures. Each of us would spend two riyals in the evening snacks, which were one bar of Safari or Ulker Cacao biscuits plus a can of Pepsi.

As my Bhai developed the interest of buying books, Bhaijan used to buy Arabic children magazine like Basim. Many times he won cash prizes for writing outstanding articles. Despite knowing to read one language, i.e. Arabic, but I was introduced to Gil Jourdan through Basim. Everyone in the school used to talk about Sega. We gathered SAR 100 to buy one set. Unfortunately, our 1970s black and white TV did not accept Sega's entry, and we remained happy with daily treats and weekly arrivals of Basim.

I entered Arabic schools and knew nothing, literally NOTHING, but Bhaijan tried to help me and be a free tutor. I learned Arabic within a year, although I used to commit some mistakes and errors. However, my biggest issue was the subject of Dictation. I guess I was an unknown case of dysgraphia, which is the disorder of spelling. Many times, I could get zero out of 15. Thank God, marking stopped at zero! In all this, he remained my tutor who guided me till my

8th standard. In 9th Standard, I was late for three weeks, but Bhaijan made it a chance to be an all-rounder teacher for all the subjects, and before leaving to India, I was as good as other privileged students who were able to join on time with no outstanding fees.

My Bhai wanted Bhaijan to join the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT). Fortunately, my Bhaijan cleared entrance test and was selected to IIT Delhi. He told us stories of his best friends at Aravali Hostel situated at Hauz Khaz. He introduced me to Manorama Yearbook 1997, which helped me to read and write when I joined BCom in 2000.

He always remained introvert, so he was lucky to have a socially accessible and friendly wife, Afshan Apa whom he married on 4th January 2004.

His first job was into the marketing of oil at Castrol Saudi Arabia. We thought it would be two poles apart considering his shy personality to talk and entertain telephone calls. However, he fought back and proved to be a dark horse and raised the ladders and made the experience of his teammates full of learning and joy. He was selected for a management program and could see, on our behalf, Harvard University while attending a course at MIT.

I pray my daughter Khadija will read this one day, Insha Allah, so that she will realize that how academically caring was her “Abba” while teaching her Baba, and great entertainment could be found in small things provided bonds are large enough.

Huma Siddiqui

Ek Doctor Ki Patni

When I was a kid, so I heard the name of a Hindi movie called *Ek Doctor Ki Maut*. It was based on a real-life story of Dr. Subhash Mukhopadhyay (1931-1981), who was a great Indian scientist who lived in the 20th Century and did some commendable research on fertilization. Unfortunately, he was a victim of scholarly desist. The film showcased the support extended by a wife to a husband involved in a scholarly work. As the name of the movie was horrifying, but it has an impact on my mind. So I thought to borrow the name with little modification to tell a story of a doctor's wife in his journey to contribute little and minor things. It's about Huma Siddiqui. After all, unsung heroes are the real heroes despite our ignorance.

Born in India and moved to Abu Dhabi when she was a tiny little child, held in the arms of her parents. She had no memories of Sundernagar where her father worked as the First Engineer to construct Pandoh Dam (Himachal Pardesh - India). In 2011, she moved to Dubai when she got married. Over here, she created her own friend's circle from different parts of India and lived an eventful life from February 2011 for the next 7 years. Life was full of visiting relatives and going out with friends or trying Pani Puri at Bur Dubai. The

choice of outside food was like a rich palter to select from Indian, Arabic or continental food.

In 2014, her husband (read: I) decided to leave banking and pursue a career in academia in the faraway lands of Malaysia. It was to her husband's surprise that she welcomed the idea despite giving away the comfort of Dubai, family, friend and many other luxurious comforts.

On 17th February 2018, she left Dubai with her husband and a 9-months old baby Khadija. The weather was the usual pleasant winter of the UAE. After four hour's journeys on Sri Lanka Airline, the flight landed at Colombo, and then the flight proceeded to the final destination: Kuala Lumpur.

At 11:30 AM on 18th February 2018, the flight landed in Malaysia. The weather was surprisingly hot within the airport premises, and the AirCon (air-condition) was not matching Dubai standards. When the team of 3 travellers came out, the taxi was not able to take their luggage. Luckily, her cousin (SA Amaan) was kind to assist them in loading the stuff in 2 taxi cars and to welcome the family to a totally strange land. Eventually, they reached the service apartment, which had no potter to take their luggage to their rooms. Nothing can be said about the room beside the thrilling interaction with running lizards. After two days, the wife moved to another hotel in the central KL, which had ants but no lizards. TV channels had limited channels and mostly in a language not understood by the family. She happily adjusted to the new hotel room.

After days, the search for apartments started. Buildings were in Condo (short form of condominium), which are gated housing societies with various amenities. The rents in

Malaysia were way below Dubai, but sadly the same applied to the quality. Some apartments were in such a bad condition that tears came out after comparing them with the olden days in Dubai. Finally, an apartment was secured, which had a wonderful view. Still, again the landlord and his wife (the legal owner) put many conditions of not placing any decoration on the walls, which made the next 18 months stay quite fearful.

Furniture was no exception. Firstly, the couple had to find something economically reasonable and secondly, it has to fulfil their requirements. One king-size mattress was bought while waiting for the cargo, which called for precautionary sleep to avoid the little Khadija jumping off the bed (read: mattress).

In many instances, outside food in Dubai is not just a choice; rather, it's almost a weekly family ritual. Things turned drastically different when the wife moved to Malaysia with her husband. Firstly, the choice of local food is limited besides being difficult to adapt. Further, the quality of restaurants in terms of hygiene and service could be a challenging shift from the usual Dubaier. Still, she tried and somehow enjoyed the simple food served at Awal Maju, which was a south Indian restaurant offering basic dosa, and Chicken Tikka coloured in red paint with burnt skin. She thought that an economical price tag could add taste to the food. There were some exceptions to these compromise choices. Some Arab restaurants, run by Yemenis, offered decent Arabic cuisine. In Chow Kit area, a restaurant named Pak Punjab offered cheap and nice desi food. Despite that, once the couple ordered RM. 20 Tava Fry so felt worried because they went over budget for the day. The same way,

once a burger, ordered at IIUM Campus, had extra cheese, which attracted extra charges and worries for the diners.

In the usual course of action, a wife-cum-mother loves to spend quality time with her family members. Malaysia was a shift from the routine life in Dubai. Every day, including weekends, at 8.30 AM, the husband used to leave the house to avoid seeing the little Khadija, and come back at 9 PM when a reasonable portion of the thesis is done. The wife used to spend the whole day with an infant girl who spoke no language except crawling through the house and keeping her mother preoccupied.

Shopping is a funfair in Dubai, people move around and pick things they want or don't want! But after moving to Malaysia, the shopping list got frantically shrunk, and it was confined to cooking stuff and baby diapers. No picking of chocolates or chewing gums at the cashier.

On 22nd February 2020, exactly after 2 years from the start of her husband's PhD programme, the thesis was successfully submitted to the University. The couple decided to go on a vacation-cum-visa trip to Dubai. News from China was coming about the spread of Covid in Wuhan. Eventually, the Malaysian Government announced on 16th March 2020 a 3-weeks lockdown which was named Mobility Control Order (MCO). At Dubai International Airport, the husband parted away, saying: that after 2 months, she will join him in Malaysia. Unfortunately, MCO continued, extended and evolved into 5 types of different MCOs. But one thing remained the same, the wife could not travel to Malaysia and the husband had no job or income to travel back to Dubai. She alone managed the dual responsibilities!

On 2nd September 2020, the husband cleared his PhD viva, and messages poured in from all over the world. But efforts of the wife were equally commendable and remained present like a supporting actor whose presence is inevitable for the lead actor to perform.

Ek Doctor ki Patni, i.e. the wife of a doctor, believed in his choices despite having different interests. She earned respect and confidence when her husband received a paper degree and reunited with his wife and the little Khadija on 7th August 2021 in Dubai.

Khadija Yousuf Siddiqi

My Little Princess

On 1st of May 2020, the world is experiencing the bitter taste of COVID-19, but Huma Siddiqui and I are joyous, by the grace of Allah, that our little princess is 3!

She is too little to understand what we write for her. Hope the day, she understands, then she can amaze her Baba with heart-touching poetry like her Mama!

Every kid, as the case with every creature, is unique. What was unique about her? The long waiting. She kept her parents waiting for the right time for her arrival. She literally made her mother celebrate Labour Day!

We thought, as her mother wrote on Instagram, that the coming guest is a he! We decided on one name very firmly! When it came to be SHE at 8.28 PM Dubai timing in Medicare Hospital, so it difficult to fly in the world of our girls' names. Our choice was sophisticated. We wanted to name our daughter after a great Muslim personality, and the name has to be Arabic! Thanks to mega, loving and well-connected families, names like Fatima, Aysha, Maryam, Kulthum, Aaminah were all taken either by the new arrival's grand-mother, aunts, or sister cousins. The next day, the father and mother decided to name her KHADIJA. Khadija

was our Prophet's first and most supportive wife. The word literally means someone who is born prematurely but survives.

I remembered a statement made by one of cousin's relative, a girl should come to a house which values her! Certainly, a house which is full of 3 boys and 2 grandsons, entry of a second baby girl was lovingly experience for her direct relatives. Not interested to get stuck to house schedule from the start of her life, she preferred to stay in the hospital for longer than usual and get more love from her Amma - Afshan Adeeb, whom she calls Jaddah in conformity to hospital staff at her birth.

Khadija is writing on the whiteboard, a gift by her Abu (Ahmad Siddiqi) and Ami (Umema Siddiqi). I wish she loves teaching, teachers, and most importantly learning throughout her coming life.

With Love from Baba in Covid Lockdown 😊

Aaminah Abdullah Siddiqi

CC ki Jaan

Today is my only niece's 9th birthday. Today is Aaminah Day!

The arrival of little souls is always a happy moment. For me, or rather for all the three brothers, the arrival of the little princess was something not just special, it was unusually cherishing. To understand this let's understand our family's expansion in chronological order.

My mother gave birth to six boys. Three preferred to leave the world in their childhood. And luckily, we are alive to experience the good signs of this world.

In 2003, Umema Bhabi (my senior sister-in-law) gave birth to the first baby of our next generation. He was a healthy, smiling baby. But he is a boy. In 2006, Omar arrived the world to join the Brother Brigade. I never liked the idea of someone calling me Chacha, so I told them to call me CC (full form of Chhotay Chacha).

I always wondered how it feels to pamper a little girl. In fact, I never experienced seeing a girl (ageing less than 50 years) moving around our Ghulail House in Jeddah (KSA).

On 12. 01. 2010, early morning I left Dubai with my mother to Sharjah. The traffic heading to Dubai was (is and will be) heavy and unending. Luckily, we were going in the opposite direction. By the time, we reached Al Zahra Hospital it was

confirmed that the baby has arrived. By the time I was going up I still had the doubt if Brother Brigade has another member, or I got someone to be loved more.

It's a baby girl!

What's the name?

My brother and his wife are pre-planned to name the baby girl as Aaminah. I was excited to see the first baby girl, in my mother's direct family, after 55 years. It means a period as long as half a century and half a decade! The baby had an eye infection so I could not see her face even after waiting for a couple of hours. When reached Dubai office late (in fact very late at 11:30), so my boss was surprised that I am super-excited. He might have not imagined how to react to something for the first time. I was living Emirates ad: last time you did something for the first time.

After a few days, Aaminah was supposed to land at our house in Bur Dubai. The night before her arrival, her Dadi and I were excited to arrange her room. Buying balloons was simple and cheap. But filling the air in them was a moon-mission! After filling the air in some, we decided to buy one pump and place balloons all around. One small trolley filled with chocolates was brought for her honour. I am sure she had none of them.

I remember on her Aaqeea party, she wore a red dress I bought for her from M&S. The little princess was fair, chubby and filled with excitement. Days passed by and I could feel that the little creature knows how her CC loves hers.

When I got married in January 2011, it was a lovely occasion that my Aaminah accepted the presence of her aunty and

always asked for her share of love from the new family member.

Her simple gestures and dialogues were innocent and utterly cute. Once she refused to go with her parents. When my wife and I asked her what will she eat so she innocently said: “Anda Roti”.

The little Aaminah is 9, Masha Allah. It's great to see that she has an interest in writing fiction. I am sure she will be a true depiction of my song I used to sing for her: “CC ki Jaan, Khandan ki Pehchan”.

Captain Haleem Ahmad Siddiqui

My Chacha Amu

In 2019, I started my series on Facebook tilted: Legends I saw/see. Till date, I wrote about my Amma ([Naheed Siddiqui](#)), my Bhai ([Ahmad Siddiqui](#)), Bade Abba (father of [Tazeen Abdullah](#)), Obaid Phupa (grandpa of [Yumna Urfi](#)), Asif Phupa (father of [Shahnaz Hasan](#)), [Fahim Hashmi](#). All such stalwarts remain dear to my heart, and I call them legend so that next generation, or at least my little Khadija can live her life beneath the shining lights of such starts.

Today I am going to write about my Chacha Amu, as I call him since I started hearing and speaking but the world knows him as Captain Haleem Ahmad Siddiqui.

My Chacha Amu was born to Dr Muhammad Azim Ahmad Siddiqui Sahab (1904-1968), a known doctor in old Lucknow from the early 1930s till the end of the 1950s, and Beghum Rabia Banu (1913-1986). He was born in Mustafa Manzil, a mansion-like house located in the Raja Bazar area which had some portions dating back to the Nawab era and known as Farrash Khana. Chacha Amu was the third child of his parent after his elder sister (Sufia Banu, whom we fondly call Api) and my father (Mr. Aleem Ahmad Siddiqui). In 1958, he migrated to Pakistan and on 10th February 1969 he got married to [Saba Haleem](#) (whom we fondly call Chachi Ami). They have 3 sons: [Aasim Siddiqui](#), Sharique Azim and

Danish Siddiqui He lives in Karachi and spends most of his time at home surrounded by his grandkids, relatives and friends.

Now coming to the Legend's aspects of Chacha Amu. His life so far, has many attributes and qualities that guide us in our day-to-day life while aiming for great dreams. So, let's start.

Entrepreneurship skills. From an early age he has a deep interest in trading and making business of sourcing goods and selling them. When kids used to aim for pocket money and spend it in their wishful games and goods, Chacha Amu used to observe what was the fast-running good among his cousins and friends. He found a value chain of roasted peanuts and started buying them raw and then roasting them on his own and then selling them to his cousins. Elders in the family used to encourage him by buying any unsold items.

Dream Big. He was born in an upper-middle class family and lived in a modest city before India's independence and now his business investments include setting up two cargo handling port terminals in Pakistan that were both listed on the Pakistan stock exchange and received a Lifetime Achievement award from Lloyd's List in 2015. In his mid-teenage, he developed an interest in joining the merchant navy. This seems to be a unique job, if not odd, considering his family surroundings. People used to start their careers in those days either as government clerks, junior landlords, engineers, or doctors. However, his elder cousin Late Kamal Abbasi Sahab, whom he used to call Achchay Bhaijan, left Lucknow to Pakistan and joined the merchant navy in 1954. He used to send postcards to his parents from different places and countries. Chacha Amu aimed to join the merchant navy so that could see cities beyond Lucknow and

even make a living. Lesson: dream to fly high even if you are born with small wings.

In 1958, my grandfather fell sick and Janab Istafa Alvi Sahab came to visit his maternal uncle in India. He convinced his Mamu to let Chacha Amu go with him to Pakistan. In February 1958, he left by train with him from Lucknow to Amritsar. From Amritsar, he crossed to Lahore. The day he was leaving, his father asked him to be away from drinking, since he saw how liquor destroyed the lives of young and aspiring Muslims. This piece of advice was always remembered and followed by Chacha Amu. He had a habit of smoking, despite being a teenager, and was scolded by his mother but could not leave it. At the time when the train was leaving Lucknow's platform, Chacha Amu took a box of cigarettes from his pocket, smashed them and threw them out the window. He decided not to smoke since he is no longer dependent on his parents and a life of responsibility is waiting across the border. His cousin Istafa Alvi realized the spirit of a young child but never undermined how difficult it is for a chain-smoker teenager to call it off on an abrupt basis. But the dreamer must have iron determination if he wants to be an achiever. Lesson: for bigger dreams, be ready to sacrifice unwanted habits.

Upon reaching Karachi, he started looking for a job in the marine line. Before 1956, it was somehow easy for Indian migrants to get Pakistani nationality. However, by 1956 no such treaty existed, and the formalities were difficult and complex. What made things a little easier was that Karachi was the capital by that time. Hence, the official government offices were situated over here. He approached one of the offices that considered his notice and sent a special note to

the Secretary's Office. He was asked to go personally and follow up on his case. Every day, he used to arrive at 9AM and wait for the Secretary and observed that by 11AM the senior-most officer arrived in his chauffeur-driven car. However, he was not allowed to access his office which was on the 2nd floor. One fine day, at 11 AM when the officer got down from the car and slowly moved towards the lift, Chacha Amu rushed towards the door and was able to enter the lift before its door could close. The liftman tried to stop but the officer was kind enough to let Chacha Amu in. Despite being a very senior official, he asked him to sit in his room and heard his request. The officer even made it clear that once he is a Pakistani national then he won't be able to revisit India. It's too emotional to even think that being part of a loving and big family, you have to make this decision where no U-turn is possible. After a week, when he reached the office at the said time, he was received by an officer reporting to the Secretary and at 11:30 sharp he was called in. The Secretary gave his instructions to the peon to take his file and inform the Commissioner's office that he is a special person from the Secretary. He took a Rikshaw for 2 anna and immediately got the Certificate of Citizenship. Till date, Chacha Amu admires the kindness shown by the Secretary in expediting his case despite not knowing a stranger teenage boy.

Now starts the process of on boarding a ship. At that time, a known business figure in Karachi's maritime circle was Mr. Noman Bandoowala who owned Karachi Steam Navigations and belonged to Bohari community. When Chacha Amu met him for the first time, so Mr. Noman said jokingly that I am a German Chancellor! because I have employed 4 Chief Engineers and 4 Captains from Germany.

He got the joining letter and reached office at 9AM. For many days and weeks, he would reach and wait but do nothing. One day, father of Mr. Noman got angry to see that the young boy is made to sit and not being onboarded. Eventually, he gave firm instructions that the young boy has to board at any cost. So eventually, for on-boarding Colonel Abdul Hakim's approval was required. He verified the request, but the ship has already left by the time clearance to board came. He was given a flight ticket to East Pakistan. This was the first time in his life to travel by air. Sadly, within 15 minutes the flight had to make a come-back to Karachi and by midnight he returned to Karachi and spent a night at Holiday Inn. Again, the first experience of staying in a hotel. Once on board, the first destination was Rangoon. In the ship, he made new friends, and one of them was Mr. Khan Bobby, whose real name was Maqbool Khan. He still remembers when he jumped from the ship to a wooden boat which flipped into a strong water current. Luckily, a Bengali-speaking worker kept on giving instructions not to leave the robe, otherwise he would have been washed out in the Bay of Bengal with no traces. In ship travel, he had a chance to sail to China, Cuba, West Africa, and Eden which was a famous duty-free port in those days.

Sailing on ship as a cadet was not the ultimate dream. He moved to the United Kingdom and started preparing for Maritime exams. He chose Liverpool instead of other place where desi cadets studied less and gave more time for cooking food and socializing. Upon clearing the first exam, he started receiving allowance of GBP 8/- per day. And had to pay 10 shilling per day for bed space and breakfast. He still remembers taking his Chhoti Chachi (paternal uncle's wife) and her daughters for a treat and spending GBP 5/- for a

good meal with orange juice and cold drink. In 1968, he cleared his Captaincy exam when he was hardly 26 years old and was among the youngest Pakistani captains till date. The first ship he sailed as a captain was Pasur. Besides his achievement of sailing to the USA and Canada's Great Lake with flag of Pakistan.

This is Chacha Amu as an achiever and a hard-working person who dreamt to achieve greater heights but lets see some personal aspects of this legend.

One of the great qualities of Chacha Amu is keeping connected with relatives. He loves to reach a place and make it a point that he gets at least one chance of meeting all the relatives who are in that place. He does not differentiate whether the relative is senior to him or many-decades junior to him. In my Malaysia study days, he made it a point to visit our modest apartment and join us on a family dinner.

Another great quality of Chacha Amu is his sincere joy when he knows success of his junior relatives. Despite our passion and achievements are nothing compared to what he aimed and achieved, but you could feel how happy he is when we are achieving something and gets concerned when any of us facing troubles in his personal or professional life.

This small write-up won't be complete without mentioning his loving wife (Saba Haleem, whom we fondly call Chachi Ami. She always remained a perfect companion for a great legend. Hopefully, I can do justice by writing about her in a separate write-up.

For the past two years, Chacha Amu has remained at his house with limited social activities and travelling but his

great achievements and philanthropic initiatives are still making great differences in the lives of many, including me.

May Allah grant him the best health and long life.

Mrs. Wasifa Banu

My Talented Phupu

I have spoken in the previous posts about some of the legends I saw/see them. I wrote about Amma (Naheed Siddiqi), Bade Abba, Asif Phupa, Ubaid Phupa, and Bhai (Ahmad Siddiqi). Let's talk in this post about Mrs. Wasifa Banu, whom I fondly called Phupu. She was mother of Tahera Hussain Siddiqui, Saadia Hussain, Uzma Hussain.

My Phupu was born on 1st January 1945 in Mustafa Manzil in her father's house. Her parents were Dr. Azim Ahmad Siddiqui and Mrs. Rabia Banu. Mustafa Manzil is situated in old Lucknow (India) in an area called Katra Abu Turab Khan, near Raja Bazar. Phupu was the fifth child of her parents. Before her birth, three brothers and one sister were already filling the house with joy and happiness. She joined Talim Gahe Niswan which was a walk away from their house. It was a modest Urdu medium school which had the achievement to give education to many girls of Mustafa Manzil who later on became successful mothers of engineers and doctors. She cleared Urdu certifications of Adeeb Mahir and Adeeb Kamil.

On 3rd March 1964, she got married in Lucknow to Mr. Shamshad Hussain (our Rasheed Phupa). Her husband joined PIA and the couple moved to New Delhi. They stayed

in Chitli Qabar (old Delhi). In January 1966, Rasheed Phupa joined Air India. In 1970, the couple moved to Mumbai. In 1980, the couple relocated to Jeddah. In 1986, the couple moved back to Mumbai and stayed there for a year, and then moved to Bangalore. In 1989, they moved to Riyadh. In 1994, Rasheed Phupa retired as GM Air India (Saudi Arabia). Further, the couple stayed in Dammam up to 1997. They finally settled in Aligarh (India). But very soon she suffered kidney problems and went through regular dialysis and peacefully left the world on 4th September 2005.

I am sure everyone loves his or her aunties, whether paternal and maternal. However, it would be good to share some of the unique qualities in my Phupu which are like guiding principles for me, and I can proudly tell my little Khadija about them.

Phupu's childhood and teenage times were different from ours. Although my paternal grandparents were broadminded and wanted to give education to their kids with no disparity, my Phupu could not receive formal education once she was 17 when she got married. This did not stop her love for education. When Phupu moved to Mumbai, so she learned English and wasn't reluctant to be tuition-mate with her young daughters. She taught her daughters Mathematics. She learned baking and beadwork. She was an excellent cake-maker.

Phupu was clear about her religious identity and was never confused while attending parties of high dignitaries and Who-is-Who of the Indian diaspora. Whenever I met her she excitedly told me how she was blessed whenever she took advice from my Abba when it came to religious matters.

Finally, and I guess this is the most promising quality of my Phupu, she was proud of her cultural roots. She never felt that Lucknow is a too small place to be associated with. She never felt ashamed to declare that her mother tongue is Urdu, and she always spoke with her kids in Urdu. I feel this is a big quality when many people associate themselves with a metropolitan to avoid associating themselves with unknown places. When she was in Riyadh, so Lisa Kaaki, a British lady working as a TV Anchor on Saudi Channel 2, hosted her on a cooking show in Ramadan of 1993. Phupu appeared in two episodes and prepared Biryani and Qawami Seviyan. My father was overwhelmed when Phupu picked Chandi ka Waraq (air thin silver paper) for decorating the sweet and said it very confidently “only available in Lucknow”.

Phupu suffered from the pain of illness for 7 years. In April 2005, I stopped at Aligarh to meet her. I stayed for 2 days and on the way back could not say Goodbye to her because she took a nap after her dialysis. Upon reaching the railway platform and waiting for Shatabdi Express, I received her last call where she expressed her love that I could make it to meet her and asked me to pray for ease of her pain. I guess, her love for education and learning new things, gave her a permanent place in University Qabaristan, Aligarh Muslim University’s graveyard, where she is surrounded by professors and university staff and can certainly enjoy hearing the lecture but with no pain or fee except with staying in eternal peace. *Aameen.*

Janab Shamshad Hussain Sb.

Mahraja Phupa

It's sad to share with everyone that our beloved Phupa (referred by family elders as Rasheed Bhai and by the world as Shamshad Hussain Sb) has passed away. Father of our Tahera Api, Saadia Api, Uzma Api.

One of the soberest and decent persons I have come across in my life who inspired us by his desire to learn new things and impart knowledge with younger people. His nature of showing respect to the younger generation was exemplary.

Belonged to a small town of Ibrahimabad (near Barabanki) but was successful to reach the pinnacle of his professional career when he was appointed GM of Air India in Saudi Arabia. And looking after the task of rescuing thousands of Indians stranded in Jordan during the Gulf War-1.

In the last years of my Phupu (Wassu Phupu), he was a pillar of support for her as well as an example of immortal love and caring.

A person who devoted his life to learning and knowledge couldn't be honoured in a better way than to be buried in AMU. To rest in peace where learning is the day-to-day custom.

With tears, we will remember your smiling face.

Janab Kaleem Ahmad Siddiqui

My Ammu

My Legend series was going on through Facebook post with the aim of let young people of my family getting introduced to great people who were close to us and who remained unsung heroes but are real legends. I had plans to write about living persons as well as those who left us. I planned one year back to write about my beloved paternal uncle whom we fondly called Ammu, known to the outer world as Janab Kaleem Ahmad Siddiqui Sahab. Like many unfulfilled dreams and unmet wishes, Ammu left us last night so had to pen down about such a great person.

Our Ammu, Janab Kaleem Siddiqui Sahab, was born in his parental house, Mustafa Manzil, in old Lucknow in a locality called Katra Abu Turab Khan. He was born to my paternal grandparents – Dr. Azim Ahmad Siddiqui and Rabia Banu Bi. No exact date of his birth can be said to be assertive. But the year would have been 1948. He was the sixth child of his parents and the fourth out of five boys. He was sent to local schools in the close surroundings. He suffered health issues and weakness so could not pursue higher studies but developed interest in trade and business and later into agriculture. He had a land in Unao. He was thin and clean shaved with articulately trimmed moustaches which gave an empowering effect of his personality. He was married to

Sadia Banu, whom we fondly call Dulhan Chachi, who was daughter of his maternal uncle, Hakeem Mujtaba Ahmad Siddiqui. The couple had one daughter: Saima Api and 2 sons: Saad Bhai and Adil Siddiqui. In 2016, our Ammu suffered the loss of Saima Api's sudden and untimely death. For the past few weeks, Ammu was suffering high fever and was admitted to hospital and received medical treatment but eventually came home and breath his last yesterday (14th July 2022) in Lucknow in the same house where he was born 74 years back and he was surrounded by his beloved sons and wife on the night of Juma. His funeral prayer was held after Juma in Aish Bagh and he was laid to rest near to his father and many of his cousins, nephews and relatives, and just few steps away from his mother and his maternal uncles and aunts.

Now see the legendary aspects of our Ammu.

As I wrote in my previous posts, every nephew or niece will feel that his uncle or aunt are the best. But legends have something uniquely special which can make them stand out. So I am starting the personality tour, hopefully my little Khadija one day can feel proud that her eyes saw a legend like Ammu Dada and he smiled after seeing her.

Ammu was wholeheartedly generous. We never had a house of our own in Lucknow. Although we proudly say that we belong to Lucknow, but our father never had a house of his own in the city of his roots. Still we, the three brothers and our mother, knew that Ammu and Dulhan Chachi's house is always open for us. We need to inform them about the time of arrival and Ammu will be at the airport. I can't recall when the first time was when I saw Ammu for the first time. But it was late in life that I recognized that Ammu was not a

wealthy landlord. Reason? His generosity with his juniors was always misleading us to believe that he can afford all things to make our trips comfortable. The reality he wanted to go extra miles to take care of his nephews and nieces. He followed a ritual of giving token money, Safar Ka Nashta Pani. On my last trip to Lucknow, when I was waiting for the flight, I found that I had no India rupees left in my pocket. I passionately remembered my Ammu that he would have given me an amount which would have not left his nephew hungry before the journey starts. In 2009, I requested him to undertake Qurbani on my behalf in Lucknow. I wired the amount. Later, I received a call from him that there is a balance amount and I need to remind him to collect it from him. Interestingly, Ammu returned the amount many times and on my second last trip to Lucknow, in May 2018, I told him that I received the amount many times, but I don't mind receiving it again and again from you. He simply laughed. I am sure that he didn't forget the first payment, he remembered to act generously with open heart.

Ammu's silent care. Our Ammu was less talkative, and his silent actions were reflective of his name (Kaleem). We three brothers use to land in Lucknow few days before our wedding functions and found everything done by Ammu and his family. Whether it was an occasion of happiness or a moment of grief, Ammu was found at the forefront wearing his white Kurta with sleeves rolled up. Words were not heard but his eye movements were expressive. He could not feel relaxed unless the mission is accomplished. When my Chhoti Phupu suffered severe illness during the past few months, Ammu made it a daily ritual to visit her and even offer fruits to his younger sister. In 2006 Baqar Eid, I visited Lucknow after a major surgery where I was told not to consume meat. I stayed

for 3 days and had only vegetables. Just half an hour before leaving to the airport, Ammu called me to an empty room and I found a plate full of chops which were personally prepared by him. He could not digest the idea that his nephew will leave the city without having his favourite dish. In 2010, one of his family friends visited him and asked him if his widowed mother-in-law stays with him. My Ammu gave a two-worded reply: She doesn't stay with us; we stay with her. The ones who saw his care for juniors and seniors will agree about that.

Ammu's clear priorities. Ammu never compared status of others with himself. He would entertain the poor relative the same way he will do with extremely rich relatives. He was happy for our accomplishments and concerned for our troubles. But never changed his caring attitude due to our success or failures.

Ammu's love for Holy Shrines. Ammu performed Haj with Dulhan Chachi. He prepared before going and showed me one book by his maternal uncle – Mulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi. His return journey was not comfortable. Still he never complained about it. His Umrah stays in the coming years were confined to maximum use of the place with less time spent in socializing.

Ammu was also present to complete any formalities related to burial starting from Ghusl and ending with Tadfeen. I remember in May 2005, when Ali Chacha's body was brought from Delhi to Lucknow, so I found Ammu at the airport near the ambulance to be next to the body and perform all the rituals. I guess all this started getting rewarded in this world. It is narrated by Imam Tirmidhi that any Muslim who dies

on the night or day of Juma then he will protect from the Fitna of Qabar (i.e., the trial of grave).

Ammu left a great legacy of care, love, and affection. I am sure his sons will carry forward the same, and we shall not forget our loss because my father used to say: If we forget then we stop making prayers for the departed souls.

I heard Ammu lost weight during his last illness. As one person said after an attack on a school: the lightest coffins are the heaviest on the heart of their carriers. I am sure the huge crowd which attended his prayer must be looking to hear and see Kaleem Bhai giving them instructions on how to lay the body in the grave. But many of them will return home and remember on how to live a life like Kaleem Bhai!

Aapka and Aap kay Bade Bhaijan ka.

Saima Azim Siddiqui

A Sister and a Friend

It's sad and unfortunate to share the sad news of our loss suffered by the death of Saima Api.

She was my first cousin being my Amu's (Kaleem Chacha's) eldest kid. She was, also, the only Indian paternal granddaughter of my Dada & Dadi.

Being a person holding special and close relations with me made it inevitable for all the cousins in the family to make a special place for her in our hearts.

My memories go back to 1985 when we came to visit our Dadi (Rabia Banu) in Mustafa Manzil - a known house in Old Lucknow. In that trip, my father took different toys and games for one and only Indian Bhatijee. I remember the happiness on my father's face after seeing Saima Api satisfied n cherished with these small gifts.

For long, I didn't visit India. when I revisited Mustafa Manzil in 1998, so I found a senior sister who takes pride in taking responsibility of her younger cousins who sometimes were annoyingly demanding from their only paternal sister cousin. My memories can't forget her face which was always swinging in two modes: Smiling or Laughing.

Being a person who received a Masters degree and achieved excellent marks and got married to an IITian (Sohaib Siddiqui), she had immense control of her educational qualifications' ego. These things never changed her attitude while dealing with some of our family members who were coming from different or less privileged educational backgrounds. In fact, she had no hesitation to deal with maids and even try to find solutions to their problems or discuss what kind of shampoos they are using. She was beyond materialistic boundaries. She was Human.

Post marriage, she was able to prove that she was not only a loving daughter or a cousin, in fact, but she was also a caring wife who later became a responsible mother as well.

Three years back, I saw her at Adil's wedding. It was great to observe that as a wife she tried to "preach" to her husband and kids that Bade Abba n his family are very special to her heart. I was given a special title of Mualana Mamu by her little kids.

Today early morning, she left Mustafa Manzil on a path she must have followed for years while going to school or to buy Eid clothes.

Today we walked the same path, and we were taught how to live a life when your family members cry for you just because you spoke to them with love and displayed affectionate care.

Today we walked the same path, and we were parting with her body but taking a treasure of fond memories in return. Our lessons and our trade both were an eye-opener.

Her body was laid to rest in a garden (Ayesh Bagh) which is "solely" crowded by our family members. Her Nana & Nani

and her Dadi must have been waiting for her for years and decades.

The patience shown by her parents, husband, brothers and kids are, I believe, signs of Heavenly winds sent to her soul and we are receiving a small portion of them. We pray as she raises steps in the Heavens that we can get closer to her memories.

May Allah Grant her Highest Place in Janat Al Firdos.
Aameen.

Suhaila Siddiqui

My Chhoti Phupu – A Smiling Legend

Today at 9 PM, Ms. Suhaila Banu Siddiqui, my dearest and youngest paternal aunt breathed her last in Lucknow. She was the mother of Ali Anwar, Syed Urooj Anwar, Syed Zaki Anwar.

She was born in Lucknow to Dr. Muhammad Azim Ahmad Siddiqui and Begum Rabia Banu. Her birthplace was her parents' house, Mustafa Manzil, in old Lucknow (India). At the time of her birth, she was the eighth of her siblings and the most junior of 4 sisters. Her father was a well-renowned physician at that time. She attended Taleem Gahe Niswan. In 1968, her father passed away after suffering prolonged illness. In 1971, she was married to Mr. Syed Anwar Sb. In 1972, her rukhsati was done and she moved to her husband's house. In 2021, her husband passed away during Covid times. On 6th November 2022, she passed away after suffering from kidney issues. She left behind 3 sons and 5 grandchildren.

My Chhoti Phupu, as I called her from the start, was the youngest sister of 9 siblings of my father, Janab Aleem Siddiqui. It was natural she would be loved by them. However, her reciprocal love was neither subjective nor limited. If she loves her brother, so it means she will love her wife, her kids, and their grandkids, and surprisingly density of this love would remain the same, if not less, and could be more

intense. My earliest memories of Chhoti Phupu go back to my childhood days when I used to wait for visitors from Lucknow to our house in Ghulail carrying freshly cut coconuts which can be easily consumed by her elder brother's youngest son. Over a period, I started calling her Naryal Phupu, a title that she liked till my last visit to her in July 2022.

My mother tells me when she reached Mustafa Manzil as a bride on 5th November 1969, it was Chhoti Phupu who kept her entertained as a junior sister-in-law. Amma tells me how Chhoti Phupu was full of life and passion to eat Lucknow snacks like Chaat and Pani Puri. During Ramzan at pre-dawn times, she used to be given the task of waking my Abba and getting him on Sehri table. My Abba was a heavy sleeper and used to stay in a room that was situated many floors above the dining room, still, the little sister used to make many attempts of getting her Bade Bhai Jan on Sehri, and every time she used to threaten him that she won't come back, but little sisters can be trusted for any warnings given to their brothers. In those days, Abba was the only family member in India who used to earn a moderate salary. Still, there was a tiny portion given as pocket money for his little sister. She used to tell how she was loved by her elder brother despite limited resources.

In 1971, she was married to our beloved Chhotay Phupa - Syed Anwar Sb. On 11th November 1972, she left Mustafa Manzil and assumed the role of senior sister-in-law in her marital life. From a jolly and full-of-life young girl, she turned into a responsible daughter-in-law who had to take care of her mother-in-law and even extend her motherly care to her junior in-laws. Her husband was a government

employee, but still, she managed family expenses so articulately that she could send her kids to the best schools in Lucknow. She jointly lived with her sister-in-law, (her brother-in-law's wife), and both were seen as two real sisters, wherein my Chhoti Phupu looked junior with her naughty acts from time to time.

She performed Umrah in the late 1970s but had to wait long before she could perform Hajj with her husband in 2000. I guess her love and passion, got two of her sons to Saudi Arabia so she could perform Umrah several times.

A few years back she started suffering kidney issues and bravely she faced them with her smiling face. A few months back, I met her for the last time and felt sad that the same jolly and full-of-life Phupu is confined to her wheelchair, and most of the time she is in bed. Even in this situation, she asked me about my little daughter Khadija. I shared with her my plan to write about her husband. She shared some valuable thoughts which I will share in my other post, God Willingly.

Certainly, her last 5 years of life were not in any way similar to her life's early 2 decades. There was nothing like – Lucknowi snacks, mischievous smiles, acts of naughtiness, being the youngest of many relatives, showered with 4 brothers' care, love, and attention. Despite that, her 3 sons and their wives took care of their Amma to the extent any obedient son or daughter-in-law could do. May Allah reward them for this pure and loving care.

In 1963, Mulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi wrote in Shawkat Thanvi's obituary that if in olden times Greek had to find a god of fun then it would have been Shawkat. I believe the

same would be true if I said that if there was an angel of good times (whether for young or old), then it would have been my jolly and ever-smiling Chhoti Phupu. I guess her earthen appearance was limited to 70 springs, but she was in a hurry to celebrate her marriage golden jubilee with her husband in the eternal paradises and left us a week before 11th November.

Her pain and suffering during illness will raise her ranks in Jannat and surely, she will be welcomed by two of her elder brothers who will be waiting for their Suhailu to give them greater company with her contagious smile. *Aameen.*

With Love to Naryal Phupu.

Janab Syed Usman Abidi

My Achchay Abbu

It's sad to share that our beloved Achchay Abbu (Janab Syed Usman Abidi Sb.) passed away today in Barabanki. He was the husband of our Appi, my eldest Phupu (Sufia Banu), and father of Fauzia Ahmad, Salman Abidi and Rizwan Abidi.

He was born in Ibrahimabad (UP India) in a respected Syed family which migrated centuries back from the land of Arabia. He used to preserve the family tree in his own beautiful handwriting. He spent his college days in Lucknow and even stayed at Haidar Hussain Kothi in Aminabad (Lucknow). He joined Indian Railways and was known for his dedication and honesty. In the mid-1950s he got married to my eldest Phupu, Mrs Sufia Banu. The couple had one daughter and two sons.

Achchay Abu was the eldest person of my direct paternal side of the family. Everyone expressed their immense respect but what was amazing is his pleasant care which can be best described as a cloud with soothing shadow. Even we were far more junior but always we had back in our thoughts that Appi and Achchay Abbu are there who will be concerned for our problems and happy for our success.

My earliest memory of Achchay Abu goes to the 1985 trip when I stayed with my mother and brothers in his Gorakhpur (UP) house. I believe it was his last government

posting. After few months he retired and was immensely missed by various respectful Muslim families of Gorakhpur. In 1991, he came to Saudi Arabia with our Appi to perform Hajj. We were blessed to be with the couple for many weeks in our Ghulail house in Jeddah. He made it a point to bring something whenever he would be back from his daily prayers at Masjid Noor. His simplicity was overwhelmingly attractive.

By the time I developed an interest in reading Urdu and Arabic books so Achchay Abu and I had long conversations exchanging some insights about what he read. In one of our trips to Nadwtul Ulema, he told the Hasani family that at a young age he had a chance to meet Mulana Dr Abdul Ali Hasni Sb. (1893-1961), who was a renowned physician among Muslim families of Lucknow. Further, he was lucky to meet Sh. Zakariya Kandhlawi (1898-1982) when he performed his first Hajj in the early 1980s.

Achchay Abu was a sweet soul which made it a point to be helpful to others as much as he can. My mother (Naheed Siddiqi) tells me how Achchay Abu and Api were welcoming hosts for my mother's family whenever they visited my mother. Till date, my maternal aunt (Nasrin Siddiqui) remembers the care shown by Achchay Abu and efforts to make a trip to Lucknow memorable despite limited resources but with big hearts. He had a self-regulated timetable but such punctuality never caused any discomfort for others who were around him. In the last years of his beautiful life, he had hearing problems and even took assistance from hearing aids. I believe he was practising self-actualization by not hearing what is not useful and keeping himself pure away from societal pollution.

I met him for the last time in November 2018, when I took my little daughter Khadija for the first time to Barabanki. I told him that I was excited to make it a point to let Khadija see her Baba's Achchay Abbū. He smiled pleasantly and Khadija kept admiring the pure soul she saw for the first and the last time.

May Allah grant him the rank of Firdaus in Jannah and bestow Sabr on all of us to bear the loss and to continue the grand legacy he left behind.

My Soja

A living Ideal

It is sad to share the tragic news of the demise of our beloved Khalu (Nasrin Khala's husband). He passed away in Pune on 6th November after one and a half year of painful suffering of cancer.

My Khala never liked the idea of calling her Khala, Aunty or Khalajan. Rather she preferred to be called "Soju". A strange title which has no meaning to any known languages to us. Once she married my Khalu in the early 1990s so we preferred to continue the tradition by calling her husband as SOJA.

These are simple but enduring memories of my Soja.

My Khala belongs to a Siddiqui family of Banki (UP). But her heart did not compromise for anything less than a handsome person from Kanyakumari. Till the last day of his life, he succeeded in responding back to my Soju when she asked him: "How Much?" and he replied: "Too Much".

A tall and handsome person who started his life in a very simple place called Vallioor which is a Malgudi-days like village near Kanyakumari (Tamil Nadu in South India). Throughout his life, he lived with those simple but articulated memories of Vallioor.

Due to financial difficulties and early death of his father (at the age of eight), he didn't receive a formal college education. Still, he never left a chance to register in different distance learning courses would it be in management or law. He never gave up educating himself and eventually, he got a PG Certificate of Management from IIM Calcutta. Also, he admired people who were associated with education. He was always happy to hear about our brothers' success. What inspired him the most was that we received Arabic medium education and still we learnt English when we joined college life. I remember once I sent Soju one of my small Facebook postings on the Independence Day of India. He was touched with those simple words. I wonder who will admire my writings in such an innocent and sincere way?!

He started his career as a simple clerk with hand to mouth salary. He climbed ladders of the corporate world and eventually became one of the executives with his employer. But what made the difference is his corporate humbleness. Soja was the same simple person who had the courage to show himself as a simple man carrying beautiful values of Vallioor. He was very famous and ideal among all classes of workers. He was a guru and best friend of his car-driver (Sanjay Baba). It's not easy to be rich as well as simple. I could describe him as a complex matrix of values vs. wealth.

My Soju was lucky enough to accompany Soja on international travels.

He visited China two times. He admired the country's clean roads and timely punctuation.

He visited Egypt as well. He was not inspired by Pharos's magnificent palaces. Rather Soja came back admiring seeing donkey on the runway of Alexandria Airport.

In Dubai, we took him to different places. But what he liked the most was filter coffee at Dosa Plaza.

He was searching for Malgudi values in the eastern and western parts of the world.

As a human being, even he used to get angry when Desi system was not systematic. But I believed his anger was also very innocent and "focused". He always wanted to be a proud Indian where "*there are certain ways to do things*".

His love for animals was exemplary. The way he used to arrange milk for his small kittens in his Pashan apartment was something great to observe. I guess his interest in animal life made him a vivid fan of National Geographic and Animal Planet.

For the past one and half year, he went through 18 sessions of chemotherapy and doctors tried to deal with his 2 cancers. My Soju was a real pillar of support for him. Still what left all of us astonished and amazed was his desire to live after coming out of operation theatre.

Living without Soja would be sad. But a bigger loss is that we cannot see the beautiful and articulated mixture of values and material needs.

He had a passionate love of watering his garden. May Allah make paradise as his eternal place of stay where he will enjoy the sight of many gardens. *Aameen.*

Janab Mohammad Istifa Ali Alavi

In my previous post on Legends I Saw, I spoke about my Amma and how she studied in different places.

In this blog, I will speak about my father's eldest paternal cousin. His name was Istafa Ahmad Alavi, and we fondly called him Bade Abba. I was four years old when my Bade Abba passed away. I was lucky to see him and experience his innocent and overwhelming smile. He had a round face, with a thick white beard. He had no teeth for many years. I guess nature must have felt that such a harmless and angelic person cannot even hurt food by biting it.

What was unique about him was not his seniority being the eldest son on my father's parenteral family side. What was exceptional was his unconditional love and support extended by him to all his juniors, whether they were his cousins, nephews, or even grandsons. I still remember one incident that I was playing with my cousins in Karachi, and suddenly Bade Abba enters the lounge. His love was simply overpowering that I had to leave playing and just come to hug him for a second and then go. My father was satisfied that his son is able, somehow, to express the same gratitude to his eldest cousin as the case was with his brothers.

The second excellent quality of Bade Abba was his honesty and integrity while working in one of the most challenging

jobs. He never accepted a single penny as a bribe. His reputation as an honest officer was a well-accepted fact in the government machinery. Imagine being honest on a small government salary and raising 6 kids. This needs a lot of inner courage and a deep convention of self-set principles.

I was able to gather a biographical sketch of his life, thanks to his eldest daughter Tazeen Baji

Janab Istafa Ahmad Alavi Sahab was born on 9th June 1921 in Lucknow (UP). His father was Mohammad Irtiza Ali Alavi, (from Sandila (UP), and his mother was Baseerun Nisa. She was my father's paternal aunt. In his paternal family, he was known as Achhan. On his maternal side, he was known as Istifa or Istifa Bhai.

He received his elementary education in Lucknow (UP). He studied at Aligarh Muslim University from Grade 8th to his bachelor's in economics.

After the partition, he migrated to Pakistan in 1948 and moved to Karachi. His first job was at the Excise Department, then he moved to Pakistan Customs. He was retired as Assistant Collector of Pakistan Customs.

He married Nusratun Nissa (aka Kishwar Bi). They had six daughters: Tazeen Abdullah , Shaheen Fatima, Yasmeen F Kidwai, Zaheen Nusrat, Shabihe-fatima Siddiqui, and Marya, and a son Khalid Istifa. Bade Abba's wife passed away on 2nd April 1975.

Bade Abba was not only a practicing Muslim; instead, he received authority in the Sufi order of Qadris as well. He got the chance to perform Hajj 8 times.

He passed away in Karachi on 2nd November 1986.

May Allah keep his legacy of the unconditionality of loving junior's alive forever.

Anisa Khatoon

The Last of Firsts

It's sad to share that today my father's Mumani (we used to call her Mummy Dadi) passed away. She was the wife of our Murtaza Dada (my Dadi's younger brother).

Whenever we visited Lucknow, seeing her smiling face in Mustafa Manzil was always a pleasant experience. In the past few years, she was suffering different illnesses still her family members were great support for her.

By her demise, Mustafa Manzil lost the last member of First Generation. We hope to carry the family values as passed on to us by our elders. AAMEEN.

May Allah Grant her Firdos in Jannah and reward all her relatives who stood next to her.

Rafea Banu Bi

A Sophisticated Phupu

It's sad to share that Rafea Phupu passed away in Karachi in the early hours of 19th September 2017. She was the daughter of Mrs Shakera Banu (my father's eldest Khala) and Mr. Anees Ahmad Abbasi (the famous Urdu journalist). She was the eldest surviving daughter of Shakira Dadi. She was the mother of Urooj Hussein, Arjumand, Rudaba Safvi, Adil Hussein.

We, as family members, knew about her health suffering during the last years of her life. Her suffering must have got her closer to the Almighty and her son (Urooj Bhai) was always a ray of hope for her.

She was the wife of Mr Azhar Hussain (remembered by us as Azhar Phupa). The couple made the perfect match and showed exemplary behaviour in practising the role of perfect host and kind guide for all the young boys of the family who migrated from India to Pakistan.

Phupu was an outstanding example of how to treat the youngsters of the family. My father was far younger than her. But she never called my mother by her name. She preferred to call her "Bibi". The Prophet said that one is not a Muslim who doesn't respect elders and show mercy to youngsters. I guess, she was beyond that. She was not reluctant to even respect her youngsters.

A pleasant smile was always drawn on her face. I remember when I saw her in Dubai, back in 2010, so seeing her face could give me a sense of affection and a whole lot of positivity. She must have earned a lot of good deeds by this simple act which seems to be a difficult exercise in today's busy and materialistic world.

May Allah Grant her highest place in Jannat where she will be accompanying her loving husband and both of them will be getting the good news of all the people with whom they were good and angel. Ameen.

Naseem Banu Bi

The Last of Elders

Sad to share with everyone that our beloved Naseem Phupu passed away yesterday morning in India.

She was the most senior person of Mustafa Manzil's grandchildren. She continued the legend of her great father Janab Anees Ahmad Abbasi by keeping a deep interest in reading and gaining knowledge even when she was weak and old. Also she followed the footsteps of her beloved mother: Shakira Banu Siddiqui by becoming a devoted wife and a sincere mother (Nadeem Ahmad, Fahim Hashmi, Najeeb Hashmi, Tamim Hashmi, Aisha Nigar Ahmed, Nilofer Fatimi, Asim Hashmi).

We were fortunate enough (courtesy: Asim Hashmi & Saba Ansari) to enjoy her blessings during her stay in Dubai.

Our prayers will continue to promote her to highest places of Jannah. And to give her family (Sahar Zaim, Muneeba Rehan, Nabiha Iqbal, Asra Hafeez, Fz Hashmi, Noori Ahmed, Ahmer Hashmi, Faiza Faiz, Ahmed Bilal Hashmi, Najia Amin, Nema Amin, Nabeel A. Hashmi, Atta Yasin Hashmi, Taha Hashmi, Almas Hashmi, Others) the strength to face the challenges of living without her. Aameen.

Captain Kamal Ahmad Abbasi

An Achhay Chacha

It is sad to share that my father's maternal cousin Janab Kamal Abbasi passed away on last Thursday 6th August 2020 in Karachi. We used to fondly call him Achhay Chacha.

He was born to the renowned Urdu journalist Anees Ahmad Abbasi and Shakira Banu in Lucknow in 1936 in his maternal house known as Mustafa Manzil. He was the first boy of his parents who could survive the early years of his life. Prior to him 2 boys already passed away. He received the extra joy and unconditional love of 4 elder sisters, 7 maternal aunts and loving maternal grandparents. The coming years proved that he passed on the same love to his younger cousins and was unanimously called by Achhay Bhaijan. My father Janab Aleem Ahmad Siddiqi always referred to him with respect and gratitude. My father taught us to call him Achhay Chacha and never called him by his first name.

Achhay Chacha moved to Pakistan and joined the merchant navy and was equally successful in his career as he was in his family life. He was married to Aiysha Chachi.

I met Achhay Chacha on my trips to Pakistan. However, in 1999 I had a chance to see him closely when he came for Hajj.

I could clearly observe two things in his intriguing personality. Firstly, he was extremely simple and down to earth. I could not feel that I am sitting next to one of the senior-most uncles in my family. He could narrate stories of sailing the ships with utter comfort and avoiding any show-off. Secondly, he remembered the days he spent with his maternal uncle Janab Murtaza Ahmad Siddiqui Sb. in Behru and the experience of hunting birds under his caring uncle. The climax of the stories would be a truthful laugh which could be nothing but the cherry on the top. Besides this, he was highly appreciative of his younger cousin's love and admiration. He was fondly telling my Abba how one of his younger cousins showed respect to him in a public gathering where the younger cousin was supposed to chair the session.

His name was Kamal and he displayed a Kamal-personality. We pray to Allah to give a Kamal-place in Jannah. Ameen.

Asifa Banu Bi

Our Loving Phupu

It's sad to share that our Assu Phupu (Asifa Abbasi) passed away today afternoon in Karachi. She was the first cousin of my father being the daughter of his eldest Khala. She was the daughter of Shakira Banu (Achhi Dadi) and Janab Anees Ahmad Abbasi (Achhay Dada).

Always saw my father and my uncles showing immense respect to her. I can't forget her innocent way of speaking and her affectionate love given to her juniors.

In the past few years, she wasn't well. May Allah grant her eternal peace in the highest place of Janna. *Aameen.*

Commodore Asif Alavi

A High Ranking Human

After introducing the young generation about 2 Legends I Saw: my mother (Naheed Siddiqi) and Bade Abba, I would continue the series and talk in this blog about our beloved Asif Phupa i.e. Commodore Asif Alavi Sb.

It is interesting to know that when Asif Phupa passed away, I was merely 5 years old. But till date, I can feel the fresh breath of his crystal-clear personality. The brain recognizes him as an angel wearing light color Safari suit with dark and thick glasses! Driving his well-maintained Mazda. He is a legend since he became a point of agreement for admiration by his relatives and friends!

Asif Phupa had many qualities that could inspire us to be a legendary human being like him. With my limited ability to recollect and compose, I shall present a few.

Firstly, he was known for his passion to take care of his relatives. Remember, he was born a century back in British India to a middle-class Muslim family. You would have many family members and few of them would be earning small salaries. My Abba used to tell me how Asif Phupa remained thoughtful of his relatives who could face difficulties whether it was due to settling in new places or even financial constraints. When young members of his direct family started migrating to Pakistan, so his house and his advice

were always available to assist people in lands far away from their homes.

Secondly, Asif Phupa and kids. It would be an understatement if I said that Asif Phupa liked kids. He, in fact, adored the kids. I remember in my early days of Jeddah's life, we, the kids, used to feel that there is someone who can entertain us before even we demand attention or submit an application. I still remember that he used to amuse the little kids by hiding his denture in his mouth's upper side. Our joyous laugh would bring twinkles in his angelic eyes. When I grew up, I used to hear the name of a gentleman whom Asif Phupa did not like at all. Reason? The person did not like kids and had a habit to keep a furious face when sees kids. After many years, the person visited Jeddah. I was eager to go with my parents to see a creature who could be the exact opposite of our beloved Asif Phupa.

Thirdly, Asif Phupa as Neighbor. Post-retirement, Asif Phupa moved to Jeddah (Saudi Arabia). My father and mother were lucky to have Asif Phupa and Saida Phupu as their neighbors in a Sharifa apartment. If you want to know how good a person, then simply, you may ask his neighbors. My father, till the last day of his life, and my mother, till today, remember Asif Phupa as a caring and loving neighbor. My mother tells me that she used to consider him as her father, and, in reciprocation, he always treated her as his daughter. The senior couple was not only caring! They were appreciative beyond imagination. My mother tells me stories and incidents of how they would praise small gestures made by my parents even if it was sharing Anday ka Halwa!

Fourthly, Modesty of Asif Phupa. If we imagine Asif Phupa's career path and the achievements he made it would be insane

to expect that such a person will not have a sense of accomplishment. On the contrary, Asif Phupa had a high stature with his down to earth personality. His daughter, Saba Alavi (my Chachi Ami) told me that once he was passing through a parade ground in Chittagong (then in East Pakistan) and saw how men in uniform are standing in respect for him. He immediately informed the young daughter that all such ceremonial things are not lasting and should not change the real person in you. I say men with high stature ensure to take their loved ones to the same level.

I requested his elder daughter (Shanaz Api) to provide me some biographical sketch of her father's life. She was kind enough to send me a wonderful write-up on her father's life. Interestingly it was jointly written with her husband (Hasan Bhai). We can imagine how wonderful was Asif Phupa as a father in law. I shall share some details over here, and the remaining will keep it intact as a separate post attributed to the original authors.

Janab Asif Alavi Sb. was born to Manzoor Ali Alavi and Ehteramun Khatoon on 12th. February 1915 in Kakori (nowadays UP-India). He was known in the family as Acchay Mian. He had 5 brothers and 2 sisters as siblings.

He memorized portions of the Holy Book of Quran. He inspired to become a physician, despite his strong command over Mathematics. However, his cousin Izhar Ali Abbasi advised him to sit for the entrance exam in RIMS Dufferin for a career in the navy.

He joined the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) as Junior Officer. He was sent to attend a course as a navigation specialist in the UK. Despite serving during the British empire, but he

promoted on navy ranks and became the first non-British officer to command the sailors training establishment in HMPS Bahadur on Manora Island.

After partition, he opted for the Pakistan Navy and was instrumental in establishing a naval resettlement base in Bakkar (Pakistan) near the Indus River. He led a squadron of two ships to New Zealand and Australia. Upon his promotion to the rank of Commodore, he was sent to the Imperial Defence College (London). He was sent to Chittagong as Naval Officer In Charge (NOIC) with the task to establish Pakistan Marine Academy in Julida (then in East Pakistan) near Karnaphuli river. He, also, served as Chairman at Chittagong Port and then advisor to the Government of Sri Lanka.

He moved to Jeddah in the 1970s and lived for almost 10 years.

After returning to Pakistan, he was diagnosed with lung cancer and peacefully moved to the Heavenly worlds on 5th March 1987 in London. He was buried in Karachi with a funeral attended by many of his relatives and friends whom he touched their lives with his magic presence.

He was married to Saida Banu (d/o the renowned journalist Anees Ahmad Abbasi and Shakira Banu). His wife was my father's maternal cousin. I am sure it will be unjust to economically mention about our beloved Saida Phupu while talking about her husband. A soft-spoken, elegant, and caring lady. She studied, in those days, from the prestigious Isabella Thoburn College (Lucknow). Hopefully, in the coming days, I would be able to write about her as well. The loving couple had 4 daughters: Shahnaz Hasan, Saba

Siddiqui, Faizia Amin, Bushra Ansari. They had one son: Ajmal Asif.

I would say, it is difficult to be great, but it would be impossible to be unforgettably great! I guess that's a Legend...

Janab Obaid Haq Siddiqui

A Loving Artist

In my previous posts on Legends I Saw, I spoke about my Amma, Bade Abba (Istifa Ahmad Alvi), Asif Phupa, and my Bhai. Now to continue the series, I will talk about Janab Obaid Haq Siddiqui Sb, whom we fondly remember as Obaid Phupa. I thank his granddaughter Yumna Urfi for providing details that helped me in drawing his biographical sketch.

In the early 1990s, almost three decades back, I remember that in the early morning, our house in Ghulail was buzzing with the news that a relative is coming from India and is giving us the honour of hosting him in Jeddah for few days. I could remember the level of admiration and respect, which was seen on my parents' faces when Obaid Phupa finally reached our house. I was too junior to him. The gap was over half a century, and in my memory, this was my first meeting with him.

Obaid Phupa was born on 15th January 1924 in a small town in North India called Rudauli (89 km away from Lucknow). This particular town has something unique about it! Its men and women made their achievements speak for them even when they left the world. It was the town of the famous Urdu poet Majaz (d. 1955). The smallness of the town made its people have bigger hearts and artistic approach to life. Hence, Obaid Phupa joined Jamia Milia before the partition and

secured his BA degree. He then moved to Mumbai (then Bombay) and joined JJ School of Arts, which was the country's most renowned institution in its field, and it was Mumbai's oldest educational institution founded in 1857. He got his degree in Fine Arts. His performance at JJs made him eligible to go for the Government of India's scholarship to the USA. He joined Indiana State University (Terre Haute, Indiana) and got his master's degree in Audio-Visual Education. Then, he got an offer to join Canada's Film Board and was present in two cities: Montreal and Ottawa. This gave him ample opportunity to display his mastery over different forms of arts. He worked under two stalwarts of animation and art: Norman McLaren (1914-87) and Guy Glover (1910-88).

Obaid Phupa would have easily opted to settle in the green fields. As a true builder of the upcoming nation, he preferred to come back to India and joined his alma mater, Jamia Millia, in the Department of Fine Arts. He rose to the ranks and received the deserving position of Professor of the Department. He wrote one book in Urdu: *Bachhon ka Art Aur Uski Tadrees*. I still remember my level of excitement when he showed a copy of his book to my parents. Living in a bibliomaniac family, it was something extraordinary to see an author in front of your eyes, and he happens to be your senior family member.

Obaid Phupa always loved to learn by himself and let others learn. He focused on his son's education. His elder son Aarif Bhai was our family's first boy to join IIT Delhi, India's one of the premier engineering institutes. He got BE Civil Engineering from IIT. He even completed his MS Computer Sciences from the same place. His second son: Urfi Bhai

joined architectural sciences and received his master's from the USA. I remember how Obaid Phupa loved to appreciate my drawings, which were quite often unrelated to the given topic. Still, he could make it a point to find something interesting to appreciate. He was not just a graduate of Fine Arts. He had a fine approach to the world of art.

Obaid Phupa had a superior bonding with anyone junior to him. That's why all his brothers-in-law were fond of him, and my parents were no exception. On 26 June 1993, his eldest son Aarif Bhai had his first daughter Aiman Arif. This gave Obaid Phupa another opportunity to display his love and affection to his little granddaughter as he was caring for her father a few decades back. When I visited Obaid Phupa in 1997 at his house in Okhala, I remember how lovingly he used to take care of the little Aiman and her newly arrived sister Amrah. His love and admiration for kids had no limits, so as he remained equally loving and caring with the arrival of little family members. Yumna told him how he used to teach her to polish her shoes every night and be ready for the rising sun. I guess that sense of engagement developed a love of education in our little Yumna Urfi, and she is, like all her sister cousins, doing excellent in her studies. Obaid Phupa used to read upon his grandkids a kids story called Chechak which is a story in Urdu about a boy who catches smallpox. He would narrate it with impressions and different voices, which made the story entertaining and engaging. I can understand for a storyteller who lived the dark ages of smallpox, how relevant and personal was to share the terrible experience of Chechak. Finally, on 2nd July 2011, Obaid Phupa left the world with peace leaving behind loads of loving memories.

After seeing the life of Obaid Phupa, I could easily consider him as a legend I saw because his simple demographic background did not stop him from working with the world's biggest name in the art. He remained cautious of his religious and cultural values. He also thought of contributing to Jamia, which is ranked as No. 1 in India for its Arts Faculty. I am sure unsung heroes like Obaid Phupa played an inevitable role in making Jamia what it is today! And most importantly, Obaid Phupa was a loving senior family member whom we love to sit with them due to their crystal-clear love.

I pray to Allah that for a fine person like Obaid Phupa, who had a love to learn, teach, and admire art, he would be rewarded with the most aesthetic and breath-taking rewards of Heaven.

Aameen

Janab Abdul Mujeeb Sb.

Silence of a Jewel

Today morning, I received the sad new, rather shocking one, that our beloved Mujju Chacha (Abdul Mujeeb Sb) is no longer with us. He breathed his last in Lucknow.

He was my father's maternal brother being the eldest son of Wājida Banu and Sheikh Abdul Wahab.

His connection with my parents was well-described in a separate Facebook post by my brother Abdullah Siddiqi.

2 years back, when I wrote a post on Mustafa Manzil's founder Janab Mustafa Ahmad Siddiqui, so Mujju Chacha was kind enough to correct oversights in my post. Mustafa Manzil's second-generation had, Masha Allah, many boys, and girls, but interestingly only 3 boys developed an interest in the history of this house. The boys were Iqbal Rashid (aka Noor Chacha), my Abba, and Mujja Chacha. May Allah grant long life to Noor Chacha. But certainly, for the history of Mustafa Manzil post-independence, we lost one important and last source.

The last few years, or a decade, were tough on Mujju chacha with different health issues. But he remained cheerful and an example on how to conduct family conversions with no distraction of TV or telephone. He was socially encyclopedic with no signs of scholarly ego!

I met him last in November 2018. I can proudly convey to my daughter, Khadija, that you did not miss seeing such a loving person.

A few years back, his daughter (our Lubna Mujeeb Shah Api) got the opportunity to invite him to Canada. Being a person with "*Bagh-Bahar*" personality, he was able to give Lucknow over-seas connections a flavour of Lucknow culture throughout the days he stayed in Canada.

I am sure many of his relatives and friends in the heavens will be waiting for his joyous and grand entry. The Jewel will, In-sha-Allah, shine there but we will suffer its silence till we, hopefully, join him.

Janab Mohammad Adeeb Sb.

A Politician for Positive Change

If you ask any viewer of any Indian news channels that have you heard name of Shri Mohammad Adeeb. I'm sure if his or her TV subscription is doing its job perfectly for the last 2 years than he would surely give your answer in conformity. A few years back Shri. Mohammad Adeeb, in his capacity as lawmaker of Upper House of Indian Parliament (Rajya Sabha), wrote a letter to the British Government along with Obama Administration to seek clarification what has changed in their visa policies (or rather as guardians to Human Rights) which could probably force them to re-think about allotting visa to Modi.

Currently, Shri Mohammad Adeeb is contesting elections for a Lok Sabha seat from Bijnor (UP). It is possible to say that Shri Mohammad Adeeb could be one of hundreds of thousands who wish to get a seat in the lower parliament and try their luck in serving the country as an abrupt reaction to the current deteriorating socio-political situation in India. In such a Tsunami wave, you can expect the floods bringing everyone up with force but eventually when waters settle

then you may find a ship in the middle of the town! Experience of few weeks Delhi Government is not far away.

However, persons, like Shri Mohammad Adeeb, constitute an important and integral part of long-lasting, real and positive political change. Only those changes can be endorsed which are positive. For instance, the change which was brought by East India Company on the ruins of Indian monarchs and rulers was certainly a negative one. However, the change which was sought after by Gandhiji and Nehruji was a positive one although the price paid in a few months was heavy and painful.

Shri Mohammad Adeeb received his political guidance from various stalwarts of Indian politics over a period of 4 decades. This made it easy for him to strike the right balance between emotions and long-term social goals. He was born in a wealthy landlord Muslim family of Barabanki (near Lucknow). When he was 2-3 years old, his father passed away and he was raised (along with his single brother) under his grandfather's care and ultimate affection. As a result, he knew the pain which is suffered by an orphan boy or those who are separated from their loved ones. Hence his hearts meltdown when he comes to know about young boys being jailed for no reasons and understands the suffering through which their families, wives and kids go through. He tried to bring cases of injustice to government machinery and up to a great extent he was successful in his endeavour to draw media attention to the forgotten lives of our society.

Shri Mohammad Adeeb moved to Aligarh Muslim University and graduated in 1961. AMU was the only option, in those days, for thousands of Indian Muslims especially those living in North India. The educational-cum-

professional path at AMU was extremely straightforward. You complete your education and then opt to “migrate” to Pakistan and within few years become an Officer or start your business and then have a lavish bungalow in uptown Karachi. However, Shri Mohammad Adeeb never thought of migrating for worldly affairs. It seems like words of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (1888-1958) were echoed, then and now, in his inner soul when Mulana Azad addressed a large gathering of old Delhi Muslims saying: “You people are considering your escape from India as divine as migration.”

During his college-days, Shri Mohammad Adeeb made a remarkable history of winning unopposed as Head of Students’ Union. This helped him to get close to Dr Fukhrudin Ali Ahmad (1905-77) who later became President of India. Similarly, he had the golden opportunity to meet and invite Shar-e-Kashmir Sheikh Abdullah (1905-82) to speak at a large student gathering in AMU. He describes the event with deep interest and fondly remembers the man who paid the cost of being an Indian due to the vested interests of some politicians. As a result, one thing Shri Mohammad Adeeb knew very clearly that India is for all Indians, and we should not give a fraction of our rights given to each of us by the Constitution which binds us together and make us proud of one of the greatest juristic achievements by Babasaheb Ambedkar (1891-1956).

Once he completed his college education, he returned back to Lucknow and came close to Mulana (Late) Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (1914-1999) who served as Rector of Nadwatul Ulma. This long and sincere interaction helped Shri Mohammad Adeeb to be a spiritual politician i.e. a lawmaker with thoughtful and humane heart. Under the guidance of

Maulana Ali Mian, he joined the Humanity Move and benefited from the intellectual wealth of Dr Bishambhar Nath Pande (1906-98) who was a true Gandhian activist, politician and historian. As a result, he learned to avoid working in isolations and helped him to elevate to a level where he can think of all the minorities and weak sections of the Indian nation and not aiming to serve his own cast or creed.

In the late 1970s, Shri Mohammad Adeeb moved to Dubai (UAE) and managed a small-scale business. As a result, this helped him understand how an NRI thinks of his own country and what should be the best ways to make India self-efficient as well as secure and prospering country.

In 1988 when Shri Mohammad Adeeb returned to Delhi so expressed his surprise in a sad tone to Mr VP Singh (1931-2008) that due to agenda-based political and communal flaring up, one person needs to distinguish himself as Hindu and the other as Muslim. As a result, Shri Mohammad Adeeb started working closely with secular Hindus from all sects of the society. His on-field involvement post remedial works of Gujrat and Muzzafurnagar riots helped him understand the tactics used by selfish and tyrant fanatics.

Considering all the above, it is evident that joining of politics by Shri Mohammad Adeeb was neither a coincidence nor an opportunistic accident. Rather he was groomed by one of the finest minds of political India post- Independence. Similarly, he was spiritually nurtured by one of the purest hearts of Indian society. Similarly involved in his own business and living as an NRI raised his level of self-esteem to be a global Indian who is proudly living in India to serve those who are

often neglected due to their small numbers or fragile voices and presence.

Best of Luck, and wish to see more of you in a truly different and vibrant India.

Mr. Fahim Hashimi

Host of Pilgrims

In my previous posts, I have spoken about some living legends and some who are not with us. In today's post, I would be delighted to share my thoughts on a legend I see and had the chance to spend time with him while I was in Jeddah. It's about our Fahim Bhai.

Fahim Bhai is my second cousin. His mother (Naseem Phupu) was my Abba's maternal cousin being the daughter of Abba's eldest maternal aunt (Shakira Banu). Although our family relation is of cousins, but he is many decades senior to me, and we considered him always in the league of my parents. His caring affection endorsed his seniority position.

Gathering biographic information is always a herculean task. However, thanks to Fahim Bhai's father (our Yaqeen Phupa) who authored a book *Akhabār wa Ansāb Sādāt Sandila* in 1986. I was able to gather many aspects from that book. Further, his daughters (Sahar Zaim, Muneeba Rehan, Nabiha Iqbal) were cooperative in providing the most updated information.

Fahim Bhai was born to Janab Syed Yaqeen Ahmad Hashimi and Bibi Naseem Banu Abbasi on 20th January 1949 in Mustafa Manzil, situated in Lucknow. He received the primary education of Quran from his mother. His father was employed with the government's educational services which

demanded various transfers from a place to another. Hence, Fahim Bhai's formal and primary education started at Mission School (Barabanki) and Mission School (Sitapur). He cleared his High School (equivalent to 10th standard) from Faridpur College (Bareilly). Further, he has completed his schooling (called at that Intermediate) from Hussainabad Inter College (Lucknow). He graduated with BSc. (Chemistry) from Shia Degree College (Lucknow). In the early 1970s, he migrated to Pakistan. He was employed with a sugar mill and then with Burma Shell. In 1977, he migrated to Jeddah. For several years, he worked with the Saudi Geological Survey (or BRGM) and then in 2008, he moved to Saudi Canadian Mining Services Company. In 2012, he moved back to Karachi and currently is managing a joint venture named Premier Water. He got married on 17th February 1978 in Karachi to Meena Bhabi.

How to talk about an emotionally wise person as Fahim Bhai. I believe names carry their portion in a person's future personality. Fahim refers, in Arabic, to someone who has a superlative degree of understanding (*fahm*). Interestingly, Fahim Bhai was always a role model for us, as his juniors, to know how to take care of others and have a high degree of emotional intelligence. Doors of his house in Al Safa (Jeddah) were always open to Haj pilgrims visiting from India or Pakistan. The caring package from Fahim Bhai and Meena Bhabi was not limited to receive the pilgrims for once. Instead, it was rehabilitating them after the taxing days of Hajj and providing them with due health care, if needed. Dozens of relatives from Jeddah visit the foreign pilgrims almost on every day. The couple ensured to host local guests of foreign guests. Suppose you are visiting in the early evening hours so you will be part of heavy tea parties (not to

miss the backed buffs and rounds and rounds of tea). If you reached after Maghrib times, then Fahim Bhai and Meena Bhabi cannot let you out without having a delicious dinner. I still remember a small and square Ikea dining table with a round hanging lamp which was placed in his kitchen to accommodate the surplus of surplus visitors. Further, this was not limited to this aspect, food and accommodation. Pilgrims once done with post-Hajj hibernation, they wished to perform Umrah but not to stay in Makkah. Before turning the hidden wish to verbal form, Fahim Bhai was found with his spacious American car (e.g. Chevrolet, Caprice or Buick) waiting to take the pilgrims back and forth to perform Umrah trips. Again the trip was never a simple one. Fahim Bhai would entertain them with Makkah's Mutaqba served with green chilli and fresh lemons. If pilgrims did not like it, then a Shawarma sandwich was also arranged. In short, your trip has to be memorable as it is spiritual and religious. I remember once that one of his junior cousins stayed at our house in Ghulail. We found Fahim Bhai in the evening, with huge boxes of Pani Puri packed from a restaurant Aziziyah. He could have smartly taken my cousin on dinner and saved the hassle of inviting those already in Jeddah. But that was not Fahim Bhai! He always had in mind that we the kids did not have the taste of such fancy dishes which were beyond our financial and geographical reach.

Fahim Bhai always remained appreciative of his elders' guidance. Whenever I meet or talk to him, he mentions how he learned things from my Abba. I remember once; he told us how our Achchay Chacha (Janab Kamal Abbasi Sb) guided him about dinning etiquettes on a British-styled navy vessel. I believe many of us learn from others, but few of us remember to remember genuinely and publicly.

I wish our legendary Fahim Bhai a speedy recovery so his juniors can continue, Insha Allah, to get Live lessons of an understanding (*fahm*) of how to care and love wholeheartedly. *Aameen*.

Suleiman Meenai

A Great Human

Sorry to share the sad news that our beloved Suleiman Phupa (father of Asma Meenai) passed away in Karachi, a true gentleman who lived by high values of journalistic literature and spent the last years as an angle in a family who will miss his blessings more than before.

May Allah grant him a place next to the Prophet Suleiman (PBUH. *Aameen*).

Iqbal Bhai from Sandila

It is sad to share that our beloved family relative from Sandila family - Iqbal Bhai passed away in USA. He was the husband of my cousin Rafia Bhabi and father of Bilal Bhai and Samen Api.

I remember Iqbal Bhai since my childhood days in Jeddah (Saudi). A tall and slim gentleman who could be described as nothing but a sober human being.

He was a few years younger than my father, but he was my father's nephew in my paternal grandfather's Sandheela family. Iqbal Bhai always addressed my father with great respect, and I never remember hearing him saying anything other Aleem Mamu, and Mumani to my mother.

He graduated in Engineering from Aligarh Muslim University (INDIA). For many years, he worked with Bugshan, looking after the distribution of products of the famous Japanese company Komatsu. In fact, he was associated with his company's name to differentiate from my brother-in-law (Iqbal Abbasi) who even stayed in Jeddah during 1980-90s.

Rafia Bhabi and Iqbal Bhai were the perfect match and made to each other. Both the kids shared the same loving respect to my parents.

Cancer was the cause of his death and long physical suffering. I pray to Allah, that all his suffering will result in greater heavenly rewards for him and give his family strength to face the loss of such a calmly lovingly gentleman. *Aameen.*

Janab Shahab Ahmad of Ahmedpur

It's sad to share the news of the demise of Shahab Ahmad Chacha, who was the brother of Zia Bhaisahab and real-uncle of Dr. Faiz Ahmad, Fatima Akhtar, Farah Ahmad Siddiqui, Fareed Uddin Ahmad and Fazal Ahmad.

He belonged to a reputed Siddiqui family of Ahmadpur (near Barabanki). Joined Indian government services and after years of honest servicing, he was appointed as Chief Engineer of UP state.

In the last years of his life, he moved to Fauzia Ahmad, Fauzia Ahmad house and we were fortunate to benefit from his talks, guidance and experiences. His encouragement of the younger generation was motivating as well as thrilling.

May Allah grant him the highest place in Jannat for his honest services in building the nation and for his love & care shown by him to all the family members. *Aameen.*

Janab Mustafa Ali Kidwai

A Human but Angel

While continuing my Legends Series, I reached Jeddah, and tomorrow is Eid over here. I have to select one more person to write about him in this series. Suddenly, the thought came that no one better than Janab Mustafa Ali Kidwai, whom we fondly called Mustafa Chacha and was known in Jeddah circles from the 1970s till now as Mustafa Bhai.

Born to Janab Musharraf Ali Kidwai and Fatima Ansari Bi in 1935 in Sandila (in the modern-day Indian state of Uttar Pradesh). He spent his early days in a small town called Jinauli (UP). He belonged to the Kidwai family, which was spread in many villages and cities near Lucknow and Barabanki, such as Masoli, Bada Gaon, Juggaur, Bhayara, Dariyabad, etc. These tiny towns produced many renowned Muslim personalities who contributed significantly to building modern India. In 1952, Mustafa Chacha reached Jeddah (Saudi Arabia), worked for the Electric Company, and then joined Abdullah Saeed Bughsan & Brothers. He married Rashida Anwar Bi (whom we fondly call Chachi), who belongs to Kadura in Bundelkhand (UP). They had two sons and two daughters. On 15th July 2009, Mustafa Chacha passed away in Jeddah and was buried in Al Muallaa Cemetery in Makkah. Thanks to his daughter in law [Sadia](#)

[Ansari](#) for sharing information that helped me in writing this piece of biographical sketch.

I must declare that my effort to shed some light on a shining star like Mustafa Chacha is futile. I am too tiny to talk about a stalwart like him. He represented the entire community in one person. Interestingly, my family was not directly related to him. But like many Jeddah people, he was more than a relative; rather, he was a role model for all of us for half a century as he lived in Jeddah.

My mother tells me that in the early 1970s, food supplies from India were limited. North Indian diaspora faced great difficulties adjusting to badly smelled chicken and thick American rice. In those days, you cannot imagine the existence of big Indian stores like Lulu or Adil that sell all types of species and dals. In those years, pilgrims used to travel by ship and could take many things in their luggage. When these pilgrims came to know that the holy lands and surrounding cities had a shortage of Indian foods, they ensured that there was enough supply to be consumed during the days of Hajj or to be sold to others. In North Indian food, dal is a very ordinary but essential item. You can ignore it on the table and present it in the cheapest utensils, but its prolonged absence cannot be tolerated. I call dal as an unsung hero of Awadhi cuisine. Mustafa Chacha felt how his community had the urge to enjoy any type of dal. My mother told me that he ensured that he would go all the way to Makkah, meet the pilgrims, and secure enough quantities of Arhar ki Dal (pigeon pea). Upon his return and on the first weekend, people were called for an exclusive party of Arhar ki Dal with special garlic tadka. People used to wait in his hall, and then Mustafa Chacha used to appear

making the announcement and inviting everyone to Arhar ki Dal.

A person is often said to be an innocent soul among children, powerful among youth and wise among elders. But in my life, it was proper for very few people. Indeed, it was Mustafa Chacha. His mansion bungalow on Mahmud Nasif Street opposite the Syrian Consulate had 4 large drawing rooms, guest halls, and a massive playground for kids. Mustafa Chacha ensured that everyone, literally everyone present on his premises, was included. He could simply walk around, sit next to small kids like me, and talk about the day and how much Eidi I collected from the morning. In my childhood days, I had a strange (somewhat painful) fascination with playing with real car keys. People had nasty experiences of me losing their keys. Many were afraid of handing their car keys to me. One weekend, I was found crying in his drawing room because all the keys were confiscated from my reach. When Mustafa Chacha found out, he was greatly concerned about why a tiny guest was kept unentertained. I remember he took me to a key hangar with many car keys in his kitchen. I was jumping with excitement but more visible and higher was the twinkling in the eyes of ever-caring and loving Mustafa Chacha.

Mustafa Chacha had many brothers and two sisters. All of them used to stay with him. He was a caring big brother to all of them. I remember when one of his nephews could not clear an entrance exam, so he was concerned about how he would make it next time. His thoughtful care of his relatives was contagious beyond imagination.

One thing was always missing in Mustafa Chacha's dealing with others. He never had a financial scale to determine how

much importance he should or shouldn't give you. For him, all his relatives and acquaintances were treated with the same affection and significance. I remember the night he received delivery of his navy-blue Jaguar, so he called my father. We reached his place in our white colour two-decades old Datsun. We found him standing at the gate of his bungalow. He took me and my brothers on a short ride. As kids, we were thrilled to enjoy a ride of a super comfortable English luxury. But it was Mustafa Chacha who was happier to see our excitement.

You may find many people who support others generously. However, you will hardly find such generous people that even their closest family members cannot figure out how they help others in the dark of the night. Once, he came to know that my father was about to vacate our Ghulail house because we could not pay the rent for many months. Without informing anyone, he walked into my father's office and personally handed over the amount in a closed envelope. He never discussed the matter with my father and remained unchanged before and after the act of kindness.

His name means the one who was carefully selected. I firmly believe that in a world full of materialism and show-offs, Mustafa Chacha was chosen to prove that love, affection, and care are the only languages to be spoken in human dealings.

The existence of personalities like Mustafa Chacha personifies kindness, humility, and humanity. It reminds me of the women's statement in the story of the Prophet Yusuf, which is reported in the Quran: "*He is no human being. He is but a noble angel*".

Mr. Izhar Haque

Izhar-e-Haq

It's sad to share that Izhar Uncle (father of Najib Haque and Samiha Haque) passed away today morning in Lucknow after suffering a short illness.

He belonged to Pilibhit and moved to Jeddah in the late 1960s when he got a job with BinLaden Group. He was involved in the construction of Sae'e (the path between the mounts of Safa and Marwa). He spent many decades in Jeddah and had a wide social circle.

I knew Izhar Uncle for more than 15 years, when my cousin (Hina Siddiqui) was married to his son in 2003. His character was reflective of the name he carried through his life: Izhar (expression). Although he was taciturn by nature. But his respectful attitude to juniors as well as seniors was remarkably commendable. During dinners hosted at his apartment in Rehab (Jeddah), he ensured that each and every guest is well-served. His spoken words were less but his caring touch spoke for him.

Living in Jeddah means you are at the gate of the Holy Shrines. As many youngsters, nowadays, could find it a

privacy intrusion if guests come and stay at their house. But Izhar Uncle and Ruhi Aunty felt it was their duty to serve and even entertain all the relatives-cum-pilgrims who visit them on every Hajj. It was a long exercise that could last for many weeks but the couple did it as a form of obedience.

All grandparents love their kids. But few take deep interest in raising them as ideal kid. So was Izhar Uncle and his interest and love for his grandson Shayan Haque.

Departing the world on a Ramzan day and attaining Shahadat would be signs of his eternal life which will be, Insha Allah, peaceful and pleasant as his life on this planet was. *Aameen.*

Khushnud Khan

Spreading Khushi

It was sad to hear that Khushnud Mamu (maternal uncle of Sameen Adeeb, Afshan Api) passed away in New Delhi after few days of suffering a brain stroke in Aligarh (India).

I met him 2 times in my life. First was back in 2004, during the wedding of my brother (Abdullah Siddiqi). Second time was in Dubai in 2010.

He worked in the government sector and retired as a senior officer. After settling down in Aligarh, he was associated with charitable activities.

His excellent quality was his infectious smile which was as pure as his heart and track record as a government employee.

His last journey to the eternal world started when he was distributing charity among the needy children. Certainly, he was trying to spread happiness among others before achieving heavenly and everlasting happiness.

May Allah keep him Khushnud forever, *Aameen*.

Ms. Romana Usmani

A Smiling Angel

It was sad to receive the sudden and shocking news that our Romana Baji (daughter of Qamar Phupu of Jeddah, and mother of Fuad Nehal Usmani) left the world for a heavenly journey.

Memories of Romana Baji are associated with my childhood days in Jeddah. She must have adopted many great qualities from her parents: Qamar Phupu and Moain Phupa. However, she stood out with one quality: her genuine smile. I could remember her always, smiling, and cherishing us with her welcoming behaviour. As Prophet (PBUH) said that smiling is a charity. I am sure our Romana Baji must have achieved many heights in Janna by her smiles. She made a perfect couple with Nehal Usmani Uncle.

I pray to Allah that she attains the highest place in Jannah and would be received by parents with an eternal smile and never-ending rewards. Aameen.

Syed Rashid Rizvi

A Chacha in the Neighbourhood

It is sad to know that last night our beloved Rashid Chacha (father of Atif Rizvi, Ahmad Rizvi, Zainab Rizvi) passed away in Lucknow.

I had very fond memories of him because both of his sons were my childhood friends. If I may describe Rashid Chacha in one sentence so it would be “SIMPLY LOVING”.

He was born in Lucknow, and I was told that his mother passed away after delivering him and his twin brother. He was a pale and weak infant, so his maternal grandmother (whom he called Amma) had to take extra care of him. Sadly, his twin brother passed away, but Rashid Chacha survived and touched the lives of many around him. He had half-brothers, but he never thought of differentiating blood relations on such idiotic grounds. The love and care which he extended to his younger brothers were reciprocated by respect from his younger brothers.

In the late 1970s, he moved to Jeddah (Saudi Arabia) and joined Saudi Airlines. He lived next to our house in Ghulail. I could say he did not just love my father (whom he called Bhai), instead, he admired and adored him. This affection was contagious, so his wife (our dear Tazeen Chachi) and his kids equally respected and loved my parents. He and his wife were nice neighbours to my parents, such neighbours who

always showed exemplary behaviour. My mother told me that my first blue dress (which I wore in the hospital) was stitched by our Tazeen Chachi.

I was a childhood friend of his kids, so I remember spending days at their house. Whenever I used to share any tiny piece of information, so I always found Rashid Chacha encouraging me and showing great interest. I am sure he was much aware then I am. But he tried to give life lessons in simplicity which we forget to teach or learn in the hassle of knowledge grabbing or show-off.

He left Saudi post-retirement and settled in Lucknow. The past 7 years were difficult for him because his health was in bad shape, especially after losing his eyesight. Still, his family extended loving support to him till he breathes his last.

His elders named him Rashid which means wise. It is the title of Four Caliphs of the Prophet (PBUP), I pray to Allah that he joins in Jannah the Great Rashids of this Ummah, and May Allah gives his family the strength to go through these challenging times. *Aameen.*

Dr. Basheer Ahmad

A Doctor and a Family

Today I came to know that our family friend Dr Basheer (Husband of Dr Naeema Aunty) passed away in Chennai on 21st October 2019.

He was a true gentleman with soft spoken personality which always made an everlasting impact on us.

He worked for the laboratories of Al Wilada Hospital in Jeddah for many many years. After that he moved to Chennai where he spent last days of his life.

He left behind his wife, his son (Tanveer Bhai) and grandchildren.

May Allah grant him highest place in Jannah. *Aameen.*

Qamar Khala of Pune

A Smiling Moon

Today morning, I was informed that Qamar Khala passed away. She was one of my mother's (Naheed Siddiqi) school friends from Poona's days.

I met Qamar Khala for the first time when my parents visited Pune in 2001. At that time, I was a B.Com. student at Ness Wadia. My mother arranged a small get-together at Saifee Street in Camp. It was my first chance to meet Amma's friends who studied with her 40 years back. One of them was a short lady who had a contagious smile and a pleasing personality. I was told this is none other than Qamar Khala.

When the wedding dates of my brother, Abdullah Siddiqi, were fixed so I took sweets to all my School-Khalas. One of them was Qamar Khala. I visited her home. But later realized that she is having a tough life. She had 2 sons, one of them was a special needs boy. The other boy passed away in his youth. Qamar Khala used to take care of the boy with little support from her family. Eventually, her husband passed away, and she was all alone with the responsibility to raise her son who had many health issues.

Despite these difficulties and financial issues, one thing never went unnoticed. It was Qamar Khala's smile. Whenever she knew that I did something (completing BCom n then MBA,

getting my first job, getting married, and so on) she expressed her genuine happiness.

She had a life on this planet which was mostly dark but she ensured to live it with a smile. I pray her immortal life in heaven will be shining and painless.

Nasir Uncle of Bhiwandi

Nasir was Nasir

Today morning, I woke up to the sad news that Nasir Uncle left to the heavenly worlds. He was one of the best and closest friends of our Addu Chacha (Mohammad Adeeb). He lived in Bhiwandi and breathe his last today morning in the town he loved the most.

He was born in 1947, the year India was free from British raj. I guess that's why he was named Nasir, the victor, or the supporter. There was an utmost similarity between his birth-name and his decades-long life.

I heard his name frequently from Addu Chacha and his family. In June 2018, I had a first-hand experience to see the selflessness of Nasir Uncle. He was overjoyed that I am visiting Pune. I accompanied my mother for her knee surgery. He instructed his kind daughter, Sobia Baji, to send us food and if we need anything, then they will be happy to assist us. This was followed by various dinner invites where he followed over the phone about the food. He planned to arrange for a day trip to Bhiwandi so we can experience fish made under his loving and caring supervision. Unfortunately, I missed the opportunity, but Nasir Uncle

took a promise that my next Mumbai trip won't be without a trip to Bhiwandi.

In November 2018, I was in Delhi at Addu Chacha's place and was fortunate to meet Nasir Uncle for the first, and sadly for the last, time. The way he expressed his love during a 30-minutes short session took me to a pure world where relations are weighed by love rather than a social position or material possessions. I was told that he is losing his eye-sight. Quite natural! Such selfless people need to close their eyes from a world full of greed and hunger for more and more. I suppose he was experiencing salvation.

I pray to Allah that all his good deeds will be the Nasir of our Nasir Uncle in his new journey, *Aameen*.

Mulana Wazih Rashid

Arabic Journalism in Indian

It is sad to know that today morning, Mulana Wazih Rashid Nadwai passed away in Lucknow (India).

He was one of the senior professors at Nadwatul Ulema, the world famous Islamic educational institution in Lucknow.

Born in Rae-Bareli in a family famous for centuries in serving the Islamic spirit, spirituality and sciences. His grandfather named him Mohammad Khamis. But later on he changed his name to Wazih Rashid. His maternal uncle was Sheikh Abu Al Hasan Ali Nadawi (1914-1999) who was known in India as Ali Mian.

After receiving his college education in Nadwa and being qualified in Arabic language, he joined Arabic section of All India Radio in New Delhi (India).

After working for few years, he left the government job and preferred to be next to his uncle and indulge in the noble work of generation-building through teaching Arabic at Nadwa. Thousands and thousands of students benefited from his knowledge and command over Arabic. The world famous Ḥadīth scholar (Sheikh Dr. Akram Nadawi) is one of his famous students.

His contribution to Islamic science was not limited to teaching. He authored some books on the history of Arabic

and Islamic literatures and life of Syed Ahmad Shaheed. His skills of Arabic translation were outstanding & marvelous. He translated some of the books of Sh. Mohammad Zakriya Kandhelawi and even Sh. Abdul Bari Nadwi's book on Religion and Applied Science. Simply his translation was crisp and outstanding.

I had the chance of meeting him on different occasions since 1997 when he visited Makkah with his uncle. That was the last trip of Mulana Ali Mian to Saudi Arabia.

Two attributes were distinguishably great in his personality. One his humbleness which was up to the level of self-omission. This is what is known among the spiritual experts as Fana. I remember sitting next to him in Mumbai and "expressing" my thoughts on different things, but Mulana Wazih never tried to "show-off" his knowledge in front of an ignorant teenager. Rather he gave the lesson of "listening" which is sometimes forgotten in the power of talking. Secondly, he was a balanced Islamic thinker. In a time where good and bad is badly mixed up, it is hard to find someone who can differentiate between them. I always believed that he was the true inheritor of his uncle's thoughts and ideas.

His son, Mulana Jaffar Hasani, is a renowned Arabic writer and translator. Even, his grandsons started writing and publishing books. No bigger blessing and honour could be given to an author then seeing such a success of his own sons and grandsons.

His monthly and fortnightly writings in Nadwa's different periodicals deserve to be subject of PhD studies in international universities. Sadly, no one focused on him during his life. I pray we could overcome the pain of his

departure by studying and focusing on his thoughts and mission.

My condolences to all his family members and those students who had the privilege of benefiting from his knowledge and "walk-the-talk" character.

Light on Mind

We are Urdu!

Today (9th November) is celebrated worldwide as Urdu Day and it is chosen articulately to be the birthdate of Dr. Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), who is one of the greatest poets and thinkers in Islamic history.

Urdu is a strange language which proved to be resilient to ill-treatment of its own people despite its innovative birth.

It is said that Urdu was created once Central Asian Sultans headed to India and made Delhi their first home. The local public used to speak Hindi, but Sultans and their troops used to speak Persian, Turkish and their scholars knew Arabic. They found a common ground in a language which was a mix of all these languages. Urdu took Hindi's grammar but was generous to accept Persian and Arabic words. In the latter days of the industrial revolution, Urdu adopted English words as well. This kind of flexibility of adaptation and linguistic adoption made it possible for Urdu to survive centuries of negligence. Urdu was a commoner's language that was spoken by poet and scholars but never became an official language during the Mughal era. Bahadur Shah Zafar

(1775-1862), the last Mughal emperor, was a poet whose creations are considered as a masterpiece of Urdu poetry, especially his poetry upon the fall of the empire which he supposedly wrote when he was imprisoned in Burma. The official decrees were always in Persian.

Urdu was never shy to claim the style of the script which matches her centuries-long endeavors to develop this language. It preferred to choose Arabic letters but in Farsi font. Calls to adopt Roman or Divnagri scripts are simply naive that lack the basic understanding of Urdu's letters and phonetic sounds. Urdu's reading and listening remained instrumentally musical which was supported by its own letters and Persian script.

As any language has centres of excellence, so was Urdu. It started from Delhi, but Lucknow, Lahore, and Deccan played an important role in its survival and evolution. First published Diwan in Urdu belongs to Wali Dakni (1667-1707) who was born in Aurangabad and died in Ahmedabad.

During the struggle for freedom from the British Raj, Lahore and Delhi took the lead to issue Urdu newspapers which remained a matter of concern for the occupier. Maulana Azad (1888-1958) issued *Al-Balagh* and *Al-Hilal*. Similarly, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan (1873-1956) issued *Zamindar* in Urdu which remained a strong voice of resilience against British atrocities.

Urdu was never the language of one religion. Despite the fact that one of the biggest references in Islamic history and jurisprudence were written in Urdu, but Urdu speakers were generous to admire the work and creations of Munshi Prem Chand (1880-1936) and Firaq Gorakhpuri (1896-1982).

I feel sorry for Gen Z when I find that their parents did not teach them Urdu which is a pleasant, confident, and unofficially the official language to connect you with old Delhi, articulated Lucknow, educated Hyderabad, and happening Lahore!

One of my nieces said it very innocently to her mother: "We are Urdu" when her Punjabi friend asked her: "who are you?".

Sharing a poem written by my father Janab Aleem Ahmad Siddiqi (1939-2002) about Urdu.

I hope as we speak Urdu, we become Urdu, non-demanding but empowered with awe of its beauty.

We are Urdu!

A Night of 14 Shawarma 🌯🌯🌯

Fillingly Laughable Tragedy

This week I was watching AJ+ video of El Daheeh, an Egyptian AUE student who releases weekly videos on various matters related to science and sociology. This week topic was on the habit of laughing. He quoted novelists and philosophers who concluded that sometimes a tragedy becomes a laughable matter after passage of time.

This made me laugh on the incident of 14 Shawarma.

As I said in one of my earlier FB posts, I spent my childhood in an area in Jeddah (KSA) called Ghulail. I was told that I was born when my father was doing exceptionally great in his business as a middleman in steel and rice deals. Sadly, when I was five, financial crises hit my father's professional life. Certifying myself, I can confirm that all the three sons of my father adjusted to these difficult times in the best way.

In 1991, my eldest brother (Ahmad Siddiqi) whom we fondly called Bhai left Jeddah to complete Engineering in an area near Gabar's movie site. I was left alone with my brother (Abdullah Siddiqi) whom I fondly called Bhaijan. Not like other boys of Jeddah, we created our own world of entertainment. There was no Atari video game. Visits to Atallah game land was a rare occasion financed by caring relatives. Still both brothers enjoyed the world of Gulial

where borrowing video cassettes or buying Ulkar Chocosandwich (with cutting Pepsi) were the ultimate entertainment and mood boosters.

Eating out never included Pizza Hutt or Al Beik. Rather Broast (with extra garlic sauces) and Humoos were the ultimate choice and best settlers. There was one Egyptian (I guess Ahmad) running a shop where he used to sell Humoos and Shawarma.

One day, Bhaijan wanted to enjoy outside food with his younger brother. So, he sent me with a paper including many things to do. The first line, in Arabic, was read by ME: "14 Shawarma Sandwiches". I reached Ahmad's shop and told him I want 14 sandwiches. There was a sudden activity in the shop! Bread was brought from inside. I was asked to sit. Being the order was coming from Indians so extra catchup, red chili sauce (in Arabic Shatta) and garlic sauce were added. I reached home late. My brother was waiting for me. Upon inquiring why, I was late, I told him inquisitively why you ordered 14 sandwiches.

That was the tragedy!!!

My brother wanted 4 sandwiches (two for him and two for me) and not 14. I read the top of Arabic letter Sheen as one! This meant instead of spending 8 Riyals, I spent 28 Riyals. Our pocket money was mainly funded by Eidi given by relatives living in Jeddah or coming from Pakistan. My brother (usually dodging to go out in Ghulail) decided to step out of our villa and come all the way to Ahmad's shop. The poor Shawarma-maker told us that he would have taken back the extra 10 sandwiches. But ours were loaded with extra spicy stuff which would be not saleable among Arab residents

of Ghulail. That was a big tragedy. Imagine, how to have Ulkar and Pepsi for the coming days! After swallowing pieces of 4 sandwiches, it was decided to store Shawarma for the coming few days. My mother decided to pack half of each sandwich on every morning when I go to school. Not to forget that for 12 years, my mother religiously packed Pouk cheese sandwich for me and my brother. I felt it was a big celebration to enjoy showing off meat Shawarma in front of my Arab classmates who used to bring, every day, cucumber filled beef mortadella sandwiches.

After passage of 2 decades and watching Dahee serial, I felt like laughing on a tragedy which filled my tommy for few extra days.

PhD Mukammal

Upon Completion of my PhD

I would like to share the news that finally, all the formalities and responsibilities expected from me to secure a PhD certificate from IIUM (Malaysia) are completed. I AM A PhD from IIUM ...

I am certainly sure that I won't be delivering an Oscar speech or addressing youth for a historic commencement speech that attracts One Million Likes.

So I am free to keep my written speech as long as I want. Hopefully, I may feel less burdened with these humble words.

My PhD Journey (from the start till completion).

As most of you know, I was born in Jeddah, and I was a junior to two loving brothers (Ahmad Siddiqi and Abdullah Siddiqi). The learning pattern at Villa No. 21 of Midhat Shakhy al Ard Street of Ghulalil was a bit different from other houses of our family. We were a north Indian Desi family who used to speak Urdu in all their dealings. English was spoken to enact some of the quotes of Nehru (1889-1964), or Persian was used to recite some couplets of Iqbal (1877-1938). But Urdu was predominant in our family conversations. My parents (Janab Aleem Ahmad and Naheed Siddiqi) decided to opt for Arabic schools for their children

instead of the usual Indian or British schools. As my father was a Qalandari human being, so my mother had a noble thought that her kids should speak Arabic like Mulana Abu Hasan Ali Nadwi Mian (1914-1999). My elder brother was sent to روضة المعارف الاهلية in Jeddah. He had difficulty to coup with a sudden change from Urdu to Arabic. After 5 years, my younger brother joined the journey and proved to be a quick learner with lesser difficulties posed to my parents, who knew nothing of the Arabic syllabus.

Now it comes my turn!

It was the summers of 1988. My father had financial difficulties. So it was decided that my elder brother (Ahmad Siddiqi) should go to public schools instead of private school. I was not aware of all these adjustments and financial calculations. On my first day at school where my father took me after the interval and made me sit in Ustaad Ibrahim Khalaf's class. Within 3 hours, all students came out with their tiny bags and rushed to the main gate where their fathers or drivers were waiting for them. On the next day, at the first interval, I took the bag and left to the main gate. Eventually, my brother was called so he could communicate to me that I must wait for the second interval, #learning journey won't be short as I expected.

I knew nothing of the Arabic language. I started from ZERO. My father was concerned. After 3 months, when my father visited the school to pick me. So Ustaad Ibrahim proudly asked me to read a paragraph in front of my father. Twinkles in my father's eyes were visible and loudly vocal. But as I said, the journey was long. I still remember the face of my brothers when they saw a remark in my notebook that I have to memorize 3 lines of the Saudi national anthem.

In my 2nd standard, I attended drawing class. Ustaad Nasar, from Egypt, wrote on the whiteboard: *Ursum Qā' al-Muḥīt*, which means draw bottom of the ocean. After 45 minutes of class, I went to him with my drawing, which was a perfect replica of what was written and seen by a non-Arabic student who could not understand or speak Arabic.

When I progressed, my biggest enemy appeared i.e. Dictation. I was not weak! Rather I was terrible. Out of 15, I used to score ZERO. Luckily, negative marking was not introduced in those days. My younger brother had a tough time in teaching me dictation but with no success. The rescue arrived when I was in 7th Standard. Simply, when dictation was no longer a subject for us. I remember it was the first time my photo was requested by Ustaad Shaafi because I secured the 3rd position in my class.

Receiving results on time is something of great enjoyment and excitement for kids as well as parents. Since my schooling started in tough times, so I don't remember receiving the mark sheet on time. Some teacher may tell us the percentage we got. I don't remember receiving the mid-term mark sheet on time till I reached the 9th Standard. That long-awaited change happened due to the great scarifies and contribution of my elder brother Ahmad Siddiqi. He started his career in 1996 with SETE (Jeddah) with a modest salary but it seems that he also told himself "I HAVE A DREAM", which was simply to get my mark sheets on time. Luckily, in my 9th Standard, I received my mid-term mark sheet, and my father asked me what kind of gift I want. I requested him to take me to Mother Eva's grave. I guess that was a symbolic gesture to mark a new start for regularized fees as our Mother Eva was the starting point of humanity.

I always had an inclination to history, even after passing my 10th Standard there were thoughts to send me to Arts instead of Science. Instead of that, my father sent me to science. By the time I was approaching my end of schooling, I had a wonderful landmark in my family, i.e. both of my brothers. They studied in Arabic schools, and they were doing well as Engineering students. Sharing their experiences made things look easier. Once, my elder brother Ahmad Siddiqi joined Ghosia College in Ramanagara so he ensured to get hold of Brilliant Tutorials for my younger brother.

I cleared my 12th Standard with high marks and was clear to join Computer Engineering. But, I knew very few words of the English language. In fact, Friday mornings used to be a horror episode for me because I had the task to hide FunTimes, a supplement of Saudi Gazette, otherwise my father would ask me to read and I thought no way better to save myself from insult than to hide the supplement. I could communicate in English: *"My name is Yousuf, and I am from Lucknow"*. For an engineering student, reading English is secondary since the stress would be on terminology and equations. Luckily, the Saudi curriculum was not good in that also. We learned Mathematics and Physics in Arabic. Instead of sin, cos, tan, rather we learned *Jaa Jata Zaa Zata*.

All three brothers knew that if it's India then it has to be Pune for making the very basic foundation that enables us to join any university in India. Why Pune? It was the hometown of my maternal aunt (Nasrin Siddiqui) who had a broad vision considering our Arabic education and was less concerned of our little knowledge of English but proud of our accomplishments and interests to read encyclopaedias and books.

Again financial constraints could not allow me to pursue software engineering. Hence, the family decided to send me to BCom. My high score ensured my top position on Ness Wadia's admission list. However, I knew that accounting, economics, company law, taxation etc. are not piece of cake for a science student. Luckily, Ahmad Sir (Tata Motors) helped me to understand the basic principles of accounting. When college started in 2000, I was excited to reach early morning and attend classes. The issue, rather an ordeal, came when professors dictated long paragraphs and students could simply swim their pens between the notebook lines. Within weeks, I was devastated to see that I read nothing and understood lesser. I remember waking up at dawn and praying for ease of my ordeal. On the way to Mumbai, I purchased the new edition of Manorama Yearbook and found that I could read, read and read. I made it a point to read newspapers and start with small news items and try to find non-Hindi friends and narrate to them my view based on yesterday's reading.

For BCom graduates, the usual path is to be a Chartered Accountant (CA). So was my case. I appeared for CA and remembered that I scored above 60 in Law and Economics but scored 17/100 in Accounting paper!!! I decided to switch to MA Economics and then pursue PhD Economics. My dream was to join the Delhi School of Economics. Don't know, but had the fixation that DSE is desi-LSE.

Upon completing my BCom, I scored 53% which was too low to allow me to appear for DSE's entrance exam. I was determined to go for MA Economics from any university and then go for PhD Economics. I remember receiving a call from my mother who tried to convince me for an MBA

instead of such a long route. I replied: only idiots do MBA!. I slept but woke up in the morning with a different mode! I decided to be one of the idiots by joining MBA Finance at TASMAC, a management institute affiliated to the University of Wale. Luckily, my Chacha Amu (Haleem Chacha) and my cousin Aasim Siddiqui financially supported my ambitious plan to join the MBA programme.

MBA was a life-changing experience for me. I had the opportunity to exchange idea with my students who used to call me Chachajan. But bigger learning was my failure at TASMAC. To date, I never failed in any subject, despite getting a Zero in dictation. In my first term, I failed in 3 out of 5 subjects. These were Accounting, Economics and Marketing. I worked hard to clear the backlog where my friends were pursuing their final semester. Chachajan cleared a 3-months semester in one year! At this moment, my elder brother supported me a lot and gave his own example when he could not excel in some of the papers. Luckily, I could make it in the 2nd semester and scored above 70 in most of the subjects. Finally, in the 3rd semester, I was 7th in our Finance batch, which had 8 students. Despite my lame duck marks, but I was the only student in my batch who could submit his dissertation on time. Sadly, the institute had to close after few years and some of my friends could not get their degrees from the University of Wales.

Once I started my banking career, I had a dream to pursue PhD. Sometimes, I thought Harvard. Sometimes it was Oxford. But after a decade, I decided to move to Malaysia and join IIUM's PhD Islamic Banking and Finance.

On 19th February 2018, I arrived in Malaysia with my wife (Huma Siddiqui) and 6 month's old Khadija. Moving to

Malaysia was not an easy decision especially for my wife who never experienced a life outside UAE. The first few days were spent in adjusting but then I became a regular student aiming to be GOT, graduate on time. Joining the academic environment after 12 years was not easy where you will be one of many listeners and not a celebrity speaker. In the first few months, I had evening classes. But when the writing phase started then the schedule was to leave as early as Khadija wakes up. Usually, at 9 AM I was out of the house, and return late in the night by 9 PM. The wise mother and her little princess would welcome a student who was struggling with information gathering and translating complex Shari'ah rulings. Materials were diversified in Arabic, Urdu and English. The pain has paid off. On 22nd February 2020, I submitted my thesis within 2 years of joining the programme. On 2nd September 2020, I cleared my viva with minor corrections.

If I look back at my PhD journey so I remember the commencement speech of Steve Jobs at Sandford's ... Connecting Dots. A journey for learning is simply your ability to connect dots irrespective of whether they are small or big, bright or dark, well-shaped or ugly. My schooling in Arabic medium showed me how parent accepts unwarranted criticism. The same experience helped me to face my failure at MBA. My elder brother's change of plan from a private school to a public one gave me a perspective of flexible learning when I moved from MA Economics to MBA. And finally, learning would be a blessing if you are surrounded by people who appreciate your struggle, in my school days it was my Soju and in my PhD, it was my mother (Naheed Siddiqi), Huma and little Khadija who accepted long and daily absences of her Baba. My mark sheet pattern remained the

same. I did not clear my fee for the last two semesters till my brother Ahmad Siddiqi did what he used to do in 1996. So, Jobs was correct: Connecting Dot!

THANK YOU to all those who crafted in these dots in my learning journey.

Cats in Ghulail



In my previous post, I spoke on Hens and Roosters 🐔 of our house in Ghulail (Jeddah). People found it funny and a bit relevant to their lives.

Now, as I promised, I will speak about cats of Ghulail.

Our house was full of cats, to the extent that relatives and cousins in Jeddah identified our house as house of cats.

Now the first and senior most cat of our house was “Nani Amma”. She was, supposedly, a Persian cat. She had rich and colorful hair. On her skin you could find black, yellow, white, brown hairs. I guess she had blue hair as well. I cannot remember when Nani Amma came to our house. She might have come to this world before me, or she slipped into my life so conveniently that I accepted her seniority very comfortably.

She was calm and extremely sober. She gave birth to many many kittens. One of kittens were Kali who was a male cat with spotless black skin. Once Nani Amma gave birth to three beautiful kittens. One was black & white with blue eyes and we called him Persian Cat. In a hot summer, he slipped into my father’s car engine and when the engine switched on, so he fell after being crushed badly. The other kitten of the pair had a brown skin and we called him, naturally, Brownie.

He was my favorite pet. Nani Amma gave, once, birth to a tall kitten whom my mother called Lallu. He was extremely silent and quiet and used to sit at the entrance door to receive bread and butter prepared by my mother.

My father had a passion to serve food for the cat residents. We could not afford lavish tinned food for so many cats. Hence my father used to buy the most economical fishes from Saudi Fisheries Company, and then add leftover breads and then cook them with added water. This was served hot and in big quantities. At sometimes, we had 15 cats (big one and small kittens). While serving the hot delicious fishes to our cats, my father used to recite a Quranic verse which meant that there is no creature which needs to worry about its food and provision, it's the God who makes the provision for you and them and is the one who hears and knows.

We learned many lessons from these cats. Generally, we need to take care of our family members even if they are non-human. More specifically, my parents taught us to be sensitive to them. We never throw food at them or were involved in any kind of physical torture. My father was extra cautious. Once Kali (the black cat) had a neck issue so he had to move around with tilted neck. I tried to make fun of the poor patient by mimicking him. My father noticed me and expressed his anger over my attitude towards a suffering creature. After a quarter century, I had health issues with neck and I was admitted for a week in a hospital in Dubai. At that time, I remembered the pain through which Kali must have gone through! One more thing, our love and care for cats did not allow us to bring them inside our house. This taught us to draw lines in relationship. Also, we never had

health issues because our internal house hygiene was never compromised.

Hens & Roosters in Ghulail House

Untold Stories

I lived my childhood in south Jeddah in a place called "Ghulial". In a separate blog I shall share the description of that place and how it made things different for us from all our family members living in other parts of Jeddah.

Till mid 1990s, our house hosted 5 human beings, many cats, few moussses, rates, ants, lizards, small birds. And then we were fortunate to have a new type of guests: hens and roosters.

Although hens are a common pet in India but none of our relatives in Jeddah had kept a hen in their houses. This could be due to small size of houses or due to cumbersome arrangements of keeping the house clean.

Muslims believe that roosters crow when they see angels. Considering this, my father decided to bring a rooster to our Ghulail house.

I was a school student in class 7 and slept early. When I woke up in the morning for Fajar prayers, I was told by my mother that my father brought a hen and a rooster. Sadly, the hen died before I could even see her alive. The rooster was alive but not in our reach! He flew up and went to the top of the mango tree. He remained seated over-there for 3 complete three days. It was a cold winter in Jeddah. On the third day,

during the afternoon, the rooster fell down and it was a dead body.

My father felt sad that how excited I was to welcome new guests but couldn't enjoy their company to the fullest. My father decided to buy a new pair of hen and rooster. This time, my father took me to bird's market, I guess on Bakhashup Road in old Jeddah. The Pakistani shop owner showed us many birds. And finally, we decided to buy 2 hens and 1 rooster. The elder and bigger size hen was gray in colour. Our family named her Hemamalini, after a famous Bollywood actress. The other smaller hen was brown and was named Madhuri Dixit, again another Bollywood celebrity. Hema and Dixit were very close friends. Now come to the rooster who was a big disappointment. He could not crow and was scared of his female companions. More than that he ran away when he saw my mother. With these disappointing qualities we called him Lullu which is a title, usually, given to those who are weak in personality. For many months we lived with Hema, Dixit and Lullu and adjusted our expectations. No eggs. No crowing.

One day, my father reached late night and we were told that he bought a pair of rooster and hen. Hopefully they will meet our innocent expectations. I still remember sleeping next to my brother (Abdullah Siddiqi) and in the wee hour of the morning I heard the new guest giving the call very clear and loud. I was so excited as I have started speaking. I remember waking up my brother who was in a dead sleep mode and couldn't understand why I am so excited. Upon performing Fajer, I came back to see the new rooster roaming around and making us amused by its signing abilities. As per the norms, new guests should be named. Since both of them were Kuntri

breeds (countryside) so the new hen was called Kuntri. The rooster was dark skin and very thin, so we called him Bangali. Certainly, he had the Bangali brains to start performing before our Lullu.

Now our house has the noise of a rooster, but eggs were missing. So Kuntri started laying eggs. This trend followed by Hema and Dixit. For many years were found our morning nutritional requirements fulfilled by our homely eggs delivered by families of Bangali and Lullu.

It was a Ramdan day and I did good in my school. My father didn't think of a better gift then giving another country-side hen. We named it *tuhfa* (literally means a gift in Urdu). She was utterly smart to lay egg with the first hours of its arrival at Ghulail house.

I guess for many months we lived happily with Lullu, Hema, Dixit, Bangali, Kuntry and Tuhfa. As the time passed some died and some were given away when they became peerless.

This tribute to our Ghulail companions who might not find anyone from their own clan to post on Facebook.

Animals in our Ghulail House

In one of my Facebook posts, I wrote about roosters in our Ghulail house, in south Jeddah. Also, I spoke about cats. Our house was famous among the children as the House of Cats!

I lived in Ghulail's Villa No. 21 from 1981 till 1999. I shared the space with my parents and two elder brothers plus a few other animals. These animals could be less fortunate to be remembered by storytellers, but let's make an exception.



Our house had lots of ants. I guess it was an old-structured building which invited ants to its upper floor. I saw all sorts of ants in terms of colour and behaviour, whether red or black. I even became an expert to identify whether ants have laid eggs or not. I could see when ants are running zigzag in a drunken driving mode, so you be sure that the ward boys arrange food! Once eggs are hatched, then peace will prevail, and hundreds of ants will go smoothly and systematically. When I was a child, I do remember a relative who stayed at our home for Ramzan's Sihri. To his bad luck, he wiped his face without checking the towel hanging in our bathroom. Hundreds of ants were waiting for a cleanshaven human being to be attacked in the early hours of the morning.



Our house has rats! They used to live outside but could come to our kitchen. When I moved to India for my studies, I was less surprised to know that rats at Mumbai Metro are as giant as cats! I have seen all sorts of destructive acts of the rats. They have even “eaten” the foam of my mother’s oven! My father got them mouse glue, which they consumed nicely with no hesitation to leave the house! Finally, a mousetrap, mega-size, was able to trap them and get our lives free from them.



Kids enjoy Micky Mouse cartoons. I had terrible memories of mice. I remember living with a family of mice who had a mission to make my mother’s stay in the kitchen stressful. I remember in one Ramzan night, they made their way to our fridge. We were happy to know that mousetrap would be their solution. Sadly, there were tiny enough to escape from the rat’s trap.



I never had a good memory of these animals. BUT I owe them a thank you note. Suppose they were not present in my childhood, so I would have thought that all the creatures are as loving as my parents and cats, and as exciting as my brothers and roosters. Almost a decade after these events, I had a chance to live in organizations where comments by counterparts were as painful as ant’s bites, and some plans by higher management as destructive as a rat mission.

Don’t See You 🤔

Yousuf somewhere else!

April Fool

No other day in the Gregorian Calendar attracts so much of attention in Muslim social media as it is the case with 1st days of January and April!

It is claimed that wishing someone a happy year on 1st of January is as dangerous as worshipping a non-Islamic idol. Since today is not 1st January so I am not trying to justify or testify this argument!

However today is 1st of April which is, according to some intelligent Muslim historians who surface on the pages of social media, has a history related to medieval Europe when Spanish Muslims were subject of a prank played on them on 1st April.

The story is such a ridiculous piece of fact that it has neither any logic nor any connection with real events! As per some writings early references to 1st of April was in 16th Century in France without any political or religious aspect. Rather it was observed mostly by commercial entities or individuals.

However, Muslims as well as any decent person (irrespective of his religious inclination) should avoid indulging in such activities which are based on lies and could result in sudden pre facto shock (if April Fool was a bad news) or mere post facto disappointment (if April Fool was an exciting news).

Hence not "observing" this day becomes a moral duty of every civilized and practicing Muslim. And for that we need not to correlate the same to a political event which never happened.

So be truthful and keep telling the Truth.

The e-Generation

Our Role in Guidance

Adaption from “Wa Mahyaya”

Presented by Dr Walid Fatehi (Jeddah)

Mankind invented technological tools in order to serve him better. However, these tools surrounded him eventually from all the angles of his life.

And one of these tools is the INTERNET.

Although it was a medium of exchanging information, it became an ADDICTION which led to isolation and running away from reality and, even, sometimes calling-off family relationships.

:::[Say, ‘My prayers and devotions, my LIVING and my dying are all for God.’] Quran 7/162:::

During the last few decades, a new type of generation emerged in the world. This generation was different from previous ones. And in order to understand any generation, extensive efforts have been made to understand this generation as well.

All studies have shown that any imbalanced use of the internet is nothing but a form of addiction, which literally resembles any other sort of addiction.

Reasons for Addiction:

Dr Kimberly Young is a leading US expert who was among the first scientists to study Internet Addiction. She has asserted in her studies that use of the internet for more than 38 hours a week (or 5 hours a day) is a sign of Internet Addiction which can lead to bad consequences.

Dr Kimberly has given various reasons for Internet Addiction which can be summarized as below:

- 1- Confidentiality in obtaining the information gives a sheer feeling of control among its users.
- 2- Internet is a very convenient medium which is available everywhere;
- 3- the Internet provides a scape from Reality to an Alternative Reality

Moreover, the person who lacks confidence can become who he wishes to be through relying on excessive use of the internet. And an introvert person can have friends and wear the character of a person who is totally different from his real life. This can lead to negligence in performing social and family duties. Moreover, the excessive use of the internet does not feel about the time he spends in surfing the internet. Moreover, he feels anxious when any hurdle comes on his way for reaching the internet and if not given access to the internet this can lead to depression and that's the peak of addiction.

Arab World Study:

One of the most important studies in this regard was done in the Arab World by Booz & Co and Google. These studies covered 3000 users from Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Lebanon, Jordan.

The age range was from 15 to 35 years.

This is what is known as the Arab Digital Generation which is growing at a very fast pace at 11% p.a. compare to Global Rate of 7% p.a.

The study uncovered the following facts:

- 83% use the internet on a daily basis;
- 40% use the internet for 5 hours every day;
- 61% use social networking for 2 hours every day;
- 87% prefer the internet over watching TV;
- 80% first thing to do when wake up is to search their smartphones and this category considers the loss of their smartphones as one of the biggest crises which can ever encounter them.

To Conclude

Any addiction has treatment. And any treatment which is based on inner believe will last for longer and have a deeper effect.

[God does not change the condition of a people (for the worse) unless they change what is in themselves.] Quran 13/11.

Our talk about internet addiction does not imply that we should completely stop using the internet. However, this should be used in a balanced way for a specific purpose which can help you achieve your tasks and duties.

Also, parents must put guidelines for usage of the internet especially during the critical times of their growing ages.

The World in which we live is changing very fast. And we are seeing a generation which has its own vision and insights. And in case we were able to understand this Generation we will be successful to get the best out of them to direct their energies for building best societies in the future.

And if we fail to do so we will either waste their energies through disappointment or suppression or otherwise these energies will turn in the negative direction which will adversely affect them and then their societies. And the energies of reforms will become energies of destruction.

Financial Ability Hajj

Weighing against the Emotional Passion

Once Eid season is over after a holy month of Ramadan then the next season in the Islamic calendar is Hajj. During this season, as most of you are aware, Muslims men and women, old and young, weak and healthy, slaves or free make the big effort to perform Hajj rituals throughout the 5 days while moving from one place to another which are located on the outskirts of the Holy City of Makkah.

Hajj is considered one of the five pillars of the Islamic religion. Every Muslim who can perform Hajj should do it at least once in his lifetime. Those who perform more than once are just luckier to perform worship which is very special and associated with dozens of Prophets.

However, the ability to perform Hajj is always a matter of concern for many Muslims. Some consider the marriage of their young daughters as important enough to stop them from performing Hajj. Some others believe that going for less than 40 days is of no use. Others believe that once you settle all your financings then only you can think of performing Hajj. We don't question the validity of these justifications for

not performing Hajj or delaying to perform one of the most important worships in the Islamic religion.

But sometimes, we overlook the PASSION which drives someone to perform Hajj where the logical route of 1+1 will not necessarily result in 2 rather it can result in infinite opportunities and multiple ways.

We would like to share with you a story of passion to perform Hajj which I heard a few years back on an audio recording of Respected Sheikh Zulfiqar Naqshbandi (Pakistan).

The Sheikh reports that once Sheikh (Late) Idrees Kandhelavi (Ex-Sheikh-ul Ḥadīth of Madrasa Ashrafia in Lahore) told him that sometimes passion drives people to perform Hajj. And he shared a story which goes back to many decades of a very poor milkman who used to live in Lahore and used to make his living through milking cows and delivering milk to households. He used to visit Sheikh Idrees and always show his interest to perform Hajj. And due to his financial impossibilities, it was clear that he should not even dare to think about performing Hajj.

One day – he walked into Sheikh Idrees and declared: “its enough!” and further clarified: “*I cannot control my emotions and I’m leaving for Hajj*”. Sheikh Idrees was taken aback. So very gently he explained to him: “*do you know that for Hajj you have to have money and need to go to Karachi (and not Lahore)?*” The Milkman replied: “*I don’t know. I have to go for Hajj.*”

The innocent man with relatively no money but with a big heart and lots of emotions managed to squeeze himself in a general boogie of a train heading to Karachi. Once he was in there so he asked people how people go to Hajj. People must

have told him many procedures but the mean to travel was SHIP. The Milkman reached Karachi port where a Hajj ship was about to depart. Since checking in a passenger ship are less rigorous then boarding a plane so the poor man managed to get into the ship and the ship boarded to Saudi Arabia!

Having no tickets on a ship means you do not have any room to stay. Not like a train where you can sleep on the floor or an aeroplane where you sit on an empty chair. However, like any ship, this ship had a deck where legally boarded passengers pass sometime when they feel bored from sitting in their rooms and suites. During this stay, a person got well-acquainted with him. This was his Ship-friend.

They used to chat when he has free time. One day the Milkman made a personal request from his Ship-friend. He asked the Ship-friend to inform the Milkman when Jeddah's land can be seen from the ship. The Ship-friend accepted the request and said he will try to fulfil the demand. In mid of a night, the Ship-friend saw lights of Jeddah port from the top of the ship. He remembered his promise to the poor man and immediately asked the Milkman to wake up. The Milkman got extremely excited to see the place and could not believe that destiny has hidden this day for him. And immediately jumped into the sea!!!

The Ship-friend was alone on the deck and was in a Catch 22 situation. If he tells anybody that a man jumped into the sea in mid of the night then people might suspect him to be the culprit who pushed him into the sea. He preferred to be silent to save himself and prayed for the soul of the poor-man.

The Ship-friend reached Jeddah port and then went through Immigration clearance and then moved to Makkah and then performed Hajj during the 5 days. Once he was back from Hajj, he went back to Makkah and suddenly one day he saw a familiar face in the mosque - the Milkman!!!

The Ship-friend could not believe his eyes and rushed to towards him. The Milkman recognized him and appreciated the little effort made by his friend in telling him about Jeddah's nearness on that dark night. The Ship-friend asked him what happened during this period. So he replied let's finish our prayers and then we will go to MY HOUSE! Once they were outside the mosque, the Ship-friend saw a brand-new car waiting to take the Milkman and his Ship-friend to his House.

Once they were home then Milkman clicked on "rewind button" of events which took place during these few weeks. Once the poor Milkman jumped into the sea so he realized that it was an action out of love and pure passion for approaching the Holy cities, but the fact remains that he couldn't swim! So going deep into the sea he fainted and Red-Sea waves were generous enough not to turn him into a heavy brunch of blue sharks, but he was thrown gently on the shores of the sea. Upon sunrise, the Milkman woke up to find himself lying in the middle of no-where. He thought, a vice decision, to start walking to avoid anyone catching him since he does not have ANY Legal Document. While moving on Arabian sands of Hijaz, he saw wires everywhere which was to protect the residential side of a port. So walked a bit and then saw a small bungalow.

Lots of action was felt from outside. He got closer and saw 4 to 5 men trying to get something fixed. All these clever men

were trying to milk a cow. Because the Milkman was outside the bungalow and standing on the sand so he gestured and showed some signs that he can help them. They went inside and took permission from the Lady of the House. She allowed him in. It was a matter of a few minutes that dozens of litres of fresh cow milk started pouring into kitchen-utensils.

The bungalow belonged to an executive person at Jeddah Port. His wife (i.e. Lady of the House) developed allergies due to drinking canned milk and doctors advised her rather have fresh cow-milk. Being an influential person, the Husband was able to get one living cow next to their bungalow but did not teach all the servants how to milk a cow!

The Milkman was tired and hungry, so he ate and then slept. When the Husband woke up, the Lady told him about the arrival of an awaited angel into their lives. The Husband thanked the Milkman and asked him to stay back in their bungalow. But the Milkman was determined to do one thing...Hajj! He tried to convince him, but he turned all offers upside down.

By the evening, the Lady happily called her father (in Makkah) and shared with him the good news of today's unexpected and a very generous guest: the Milkman. The Father had recently started his dairy farm with 6-7 cows in Makkah and he was looking for a Milkman. The Father asked the Lady to send the Milkman to Makkah and daily, she will receive the required quantity of fresh milk.

The Husband and the Lady gave a revised Offer to the Milkman who was still adamant that he does not want anything but Hajj. So they managed to take him to Makkah

where the Father asked him to stay back in Makkah after Hajj. The Milkman excused himself saying: “I have a wife and kids back in Lahore.” The Father said: “No issues. The last ship from Karachi has yet to leave the port. We will get all the formalities done for them as well.” Within a few weeks, the family was reunited, and they performed Hajj and the Milkman was given a house and a car by the Father since he was the so-called Project Manager.

So here certainly emotional passion overruled financial abilities.

Serious Stuff

Eid Prayers during COVID times!

Within 10 days, we will witness 2020's first Eid which will be, unfortunately, different from many Eid we have seen before. Muslims in different parts of the world will not be allowed to celebrate fasting a full month for Allah's rewards by starting the day with performing Eid Prayers outside their houses and then visiting relatives.

Hanafis and Mālikīs have the opinion that if congressional Eid prayers are missed, then individuals or smaller groups cannot pray. However, Shāfi'īs are of the opinion that prayers can be performed individually as well. I prefer that Muslims, in these conditions where lockdown is imposed, should observe one of the important prayers of the year in their respective capacity without violating the guidelines given by the officials. Hence, persons who are staying alone in their houses or quarantined can also perform Eid prayers based on scholars' valid opinion.

Eid's time starts after half an hour from the sunrise and lasts until the Zawāl time (usually 12). So pray Fajar, take a bath

as per Sunnah, wear clean clothes, have dates in odd numbers. Say Takbir while waiting for the prayer:

الله أكبر، الله أكبر ، لا إله إلا الله،
(و) الله أكبر، الله أكبر، والله الحمد

Then, without Khutba, start performing Eid prayers, and no need to call for Adhan or Aqāma.

It a 2 Rak'a prayer. You shall say Allah Akbar, as you say normally, and then raise your hand again by saying Allah Akbar. You shall raise your hands by saying Allah Akhbar 7 times, and then start reading Fatiha and preferably Surah Al-A'la (Chapter 87) and then say Allah Akbar and go to Ruku' and carry on the prayer as usual. After standing up for the 2nd Rak'a, you shall raise your hands by saying Allah Akbar 5 times, and when finished then start reading Fatiha and preferably Surah Al-Ghāshiya (Chapter 88) and then carry the prayer as usual. The evidence of 12 Takbīra of Eid is given by Hadīth of Tirmidhī.

May Allah take out the entire humanity from these difficult times, and our coming Eid will start with prayers performed with our loved ones and families. *Aameen*.

Solar Eclipse Prayers

As per Muslim believes eclipses, whether solar or lunar, are signs from the God which require offering of the prayers to him.

Actually, the prayer needs to be performed in Masjid congressionally, but I guess most of us in the lockdown could not fulfil that. As per Hanafis, it could be prayed individually as well, and it's prayed like any Nafal prayer of 2 Rak'a (رَكْعَةً).

However, as per other Fiqh schools, it's prayed like this:

- It's 2 Rak'a prayer.
- It starts normally with Istiftah, followed by Fatiha and a Surah, then
- Bend down for a Ruku', then
- Stand straight and read, again, Fatiha and a Surah, then
- Bend down for a Ruku', then
- Stand Straight, then
- Go for Sajida by prostrating.

Same Process repeated in the 2nd Rak'a as well.

So, the only difference from the normal 2 Rak'a prayers is that a person is supposed to again read Fatiha and Surah after the first Ruku' (ركوع).

May Allah accept our prayers and supplications (دعاء).
Aameen.

Ṣalāt al-Tasbīḥ

In the last ten days of Ramāḍan, Muslim men and women endeavor to get closer to Allah by worshiping more and dedicating time in good deeds. Some race to finish reciting the Quran, some go for long Qiyām al-Layl. I receive questions about Ṣalāt al-Tasbīḥ and how to pray it.

First of all, Ṣalāt al-Tasbīḥ is neither Bida', and not its supporting Ḥadīth is Muḍū'. Its evidence is found in Tirmidhī and Abū Daūd. It is Ḥasan Lighayrihīh. Even Imam Nawawī (author of Riyādh al-Ṣāliḥīn) considered praying Ṣalāt al-Tasbīḥ as Mustahab. The Prophet (PBUH) advised his uncle (Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib) to pray Ṣalāt al-Tasbīḥ.

It's a Nafil prayer which is neither of any form of obligation (Farḍ or Wājib). While praying, it should be ensured that it is not a prohibited time to pray (i.e. after Fajar before sunrise or between Aṣir and Maghrib).

Its a 4 Rakāt prayer. In this prayer, the following words (which will be referred to as Tasbīḥ) are repeated in a certain number of times:

سبحان الله، والحمد لله، ولا إله إلا الله، والله أكبر

In the 1st Raka-

1. After finishing from reciting the Fātiḥa and Surah, then the person may read the Taṣbīḥ 15 times, then
2. Go to Ruku and read the above Taṣbīḥ 10 times, then
3. Come straight from Ruku and read the above Taṣbīḥ 10 times, then
4. Go to Sijda and read the above Taṣbīḥ 10 times, then
5. Sit down between the Sijda and read the above Taṣbīḥ 10 times, then
6. Go to the second Sijda and read the above Taṣbīḥ 10 times, then
7. Then stand up straight and read the Taṣbīḥ 10 times.

In the 2nd and 4th Raka' read the Taṣbīḥ when sitting for Tashahhud.

The total number of Taṣbīḥ in each Raka' is 75 times. Hence the total in 4 Raka' would be 300 times.

May Allah accept our good deeds and forgive us for our shortcomings.

Aameen.

Ramadan

Ramadan (also, spelled as Ramazan) is the 9th month of the Hijrah calendar which is followed by Muslims around the world in observing their rituals, worships, and religious rulings.

Since Hijrah calendar is a lunar one, so upon moon sighting on the last day of the preceding month, Ramadan starts. Hence, Muslims all over the world very eagerly wait for the confirmation that the month has started, or they must wait for a day.

From the first night of Ramadan, all Muslims, men, and women, perform extra prayer known as tarweeh (tarwīḥ). Those who have the time and willingness go to near mosques and attend the long prayers and try to hear the entire Quran during the nights of Ramadan.

Prior to dawn (fajar), Muslims wake up to have a meal before starting the fast. This meal is known as suḥūr. Muslims believe that earlier religious communities, who used to fast, never had the chance to have suḥūr so if someone slept, he misses the chance to eat till the next day sunset. Muslims were blessed to benefit from suḥūr and have some intake of liquids, hot beverages, and food for the remaining day.

Once the dawn (fajar) rises, then all Muslims who are intending to fast must abstain from eating and drinking.

Different traditions emerged around the world to inform people about nearing the time of fajar. This was important to avoid people missing their fast with no intention to do so. In Egypt, they used to bang a cannon. This act was followed in many middle eastern countries so people would hear the voice easily and be aware no more eating or drinking. In some places, masharati used to roam around and wake up people for the suhūr. Certainly, by using loudspeakers in the mosques and accurate watches, the importance of such traditions has reduced.

Once the adhān (the call for prayer) is given from the mosques, Muslims try to perform the morning prayer (fajar) in the mosque.

After the prayer is over, fasting Muslims try to recite some parts of Quran. Quran is the holy book which has the message of Allah to His last Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Ramadan and Quran have a direct relation. In fact, Ramadan was referred, in Quran, as the month of Quran because Quran started revealing to the Prophet (ﷺ) in the month of Ramadan. This was the reason that every year, during Ramadan, the Prophet (ﷺ) used to dedicate himself to reading the revealed Quran.

Muslims come up to their home and the normal daily routine starts whether by staying at home, going to offices, or attending schools. The worship of fasting is followed by Muslims for the past 1439 years. Muslims started fasting in the second year of their migration to Madinah. The Prophet (ﷺ) experienced fasting 9 months of Ramadan.

One of the main goals of fasting was to move from the greedy nature of running after food and trying to live some part of

the day in an angelic and pure nature of the soul. Also, fasting Muslims would feel the pain of hunger through which the poor and hungry humans go through. The goal of fasting is not limited to feeling the pain, rather Muslims are encouraged to arrange the food for opening the fast for those who are fasting. This is the reason that Muslims all over the world arrange iftar for their relatives, friends, workers, and most importantly in tents outside mosques. Thousands of needy and fasting Muslims get food from these arrangements.

While fasting, Muslims are required to abstain from committing sexual acts. Also, the rulings regarding the prohibition of using bad words or backbiting become more stringent during the fasting hours. In fact, some reporting mentioned that someone who is involved in the backbiting of his fellow Muslims is missing the actual reward of fasting. The Prophet (ﷺ) instructed us when someone tries to enter into a verbal quarrel, then the response from the fasting Muslim should: "I am fasting". All such acts exhibit the angelic picture of ourselves which hides behind our inhuman nature. During the Ramadan, many Muslims pay their Zakat which is an obligatory charity amount paid on their financial holdings.

Once sunset time nears, then Muslims gather in the house or the mosque to open the fast. The act of opening the fast is called iftar which has to be done after the sunset. Muslims, following the tradition of the Prophet (ﷺ) from the Madinah times, open the fast by eating dates. This is followed by a sip of water. Those who can arrange will have a sip of zamzam which is the sacred water from Makkah. After having some snacks depending on the different locations and traditions,

Muslims perform the prayer of Maghrib. After the prayer, Muslims have a daily meal. After an hour, Muslims perform 'Isha prayer, followed by Tarweeh.

As the days of Ramadan pass by, Muslims wait for the last ten nights of the month. These are the most special nights of the Muslims' year. They contain one night which is more special than 1000 months! Means if a Muslim performs good deeds in this night so its rewards are equal to one thousand months. It would be an odd number night (i.e. 21, 23, 25, 27 or 29). Some sayings referred to 27th as the closest to be that night. However, Muslims go for longer prayer nights (qiyām al-layl) and those who can afford even stay the full night awake.

This act of extra effort in getting closer to Allah comes with a community act like i'tikāf. It refers to a group of people sitting in the mosque for 10 nights and engaging in acts of worship without spending much time on worldly comfort. The Prophet (ﷺ) used to observe i'tikāf on every 10 nights of Ramadan. In the last year of his life, he spent 20 nights in i'tikāf. Some mosques make arrangements for those who want to stay in the mosque during these nights.

Upon getting close to the end of Ramadan, Muslims are required to obligatorily look after poor people. Hence, Muslims are required to pay a mandatory amount of charity which is known as zakat al-fiṭir. It amounts to the value of 2.2 kg of grains of the place where the paying Muslim is staying. Zakat al- Fiṭir is compulsory on every Muslim whether adult or minor. It even includes those who did not fast because of their illness.

The month of Ramadan ends with moon sighting, as it started. After the opening of the fast of the 29th day, Muslims try to sight the moon. If no moon was sighted, then Muslims have to fast another day i.e. the 30th day of the month. If the moon was sighted, then its Eid!

Şadaqat al-Fiṭir

In the 2nd year of Hijrah, Allah made Şadaqat al-Fiṭir an obligation on the Muslims. This is a form of charity that needs to be given by the end of the month of Ramaḍān.

The charity is a gesture of thanking Allah of giving us the chance to live with the Holy Month and getting ourselves engaged in different forms of worship and obedience like fasting, reciting Quran, charity, praying through the nights. This is a charity to be given to the poor to make their Eid less suffering.

Şadaqat al-Fiṭir is an obligation on every Muslim and freedman who owns food more than the requirement of the Eid night and the day. The obligation to give applies to the infant as well as elderly people. Hence, the master of the family has the responsibility to take out the charity portion for the members of the family.

As per Ḥanafis, its timing starts from the Fajar of the Eid al-Fiṭir and ends before the performance of the Eid prayers. It can be paid a day earlier as well. As per the majority of the scholars, giving Şadaqat al-Fiṭir becomes obligatory from the start of the Eid day (i.e. sunset of the last day of Ramaḍān). The same way, as per Mālikī and Ḥanbalīs, allowed giving Şadaqat al-Fiṭir a day or two before the Eid. However, as per

Shāfi'is, it is permitted to give away Ṣadaqat al-Fiṭir from the start of the month of Ramaḍān. However, it would be prohibited (Ḥaram) to delay giving Ṣadaqat al-Fiṭir beyond the time of Eid prayers. Considering these difficult times of COVID-19, it would be apt for Muslims all over the world to give away Ṣadaqat al-Fiṭir in advance so the ordeal of the suffering poor is reduced. Also, Ṣadaqat al-Fiṭir can be given to poor non-Muslims as well.

Ṣadaqat al-Fiṭir's value is derived based on the subject commodity. The measurement reported in the Hadīth is Ṣa' which is as per the modern-day scale comes to 3.8 kg. Hence, as per Ḥanafīs, if a person can afford then he should take out 3.266 kg of dates, raisin or dry dates. If the person is not financially well-off then he may take out 1.75 kg of wheat. Mālīkī, have other forms like corn, raisin, millet. As per Shāfi'is, it would be one ṣa' of the common food commodity, which is usually taken by the people of the city. Whatever will be the result, as the basis of calculation, this would be the obligation to give on one person.

Majority of the scholars are of the view that Ṣadaqat al-Fiṭir should be given, as a general practice, in-kind. However, Ḥanafīs are of the view that an amount equal to the value of the Ṣadaqat al-Fiṭir can be given to the deserving poor. In these times, when poor need food so it would be apt to secure commodity which will be equal to the measurement given above. In case the poor requires cash, then the cash equal to the value of Ṣadaqat al-Fiṭir can be given to him based on Ḥanafīs' view.

May Allah accept our deeds and make the coming Ramaḍāns less suffering for the poor all over the world. *Aameen.*

Greeting for Haja

On the Bidah Scale

The religion of Islam was introduced to the humanity by the arrival of the Holy Prophet Muhammad in the 7th Century. It was the divine direction which ensured that the religion should not lose its shine wherein late-joiners (whether in 21st or 42nd century) are not disillusioned or sceptical about the originality of the religion which arrived many centuries back.

To draw a clear line between the original and fake, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) appreciated the efforts made by his followers or late-comers in following the Sunnah (i.e. his way and pattern of life) and disowning any kind of Bidah (i.e. unwanted addition in the religion).

Almost 13 centuries of the glorious Islamic History saw a united pattern and flow of thought in determining what is Sunnah and what is Bidah? Ironically in Mid-20th Century, the Salafi movement of Najd (central province of Saudi Arabia) gained political as well as intellectual influence. Based on the foundations of a simple and genuine movement started by Imam Mohammad bin Abdulwahab of 18th Century, the Salafi movement started opposing the dangerous forms of Bidah which were somehow prevalent in some parts of the Arabian Peninsula. However, with passage

of time and disappearance of Bidah, the clerics of the movement found themselves with no “Holy Cause” to fight for. If you are following Sunnah and the other person is following Sunnah then I left with no job to fight for Bidah. Unfortunately, new avenues were explored (or somehow invented) to serve this Holy Cause. Within a span of 20 years, a collection of Fatwa (i.e. religious decrees) were issued by some Salafi scholars which easily labelled every aspect of our life as Bidah. In fact one of the leading scholars wrote an “encyclopaedia” on the forms of Bidah in our day to day life.

It was evident that most of these juristic conclusions had weak foundations due to absence of clear understanding of what is Sunnah and what is Bidah. Sheikh Dr. Abdul Elah Al Arfaj (a Saudi professor in King Fahad University) compiled a collection of contradictions among the Fatwas of contemporary Salafi scholars. So, you will find that reciting Quran from the Holy Book while performing the prayers is considered Bidah by Albani but Sheikh Bin Baaz, Sheikh Ibn Uthumain and Fawzan considered it as permissible. Similarly using Misbah (tool to perform the Diker) was considered as Bidah by Albani and Fawzan but Sheikh bin Baaz, Sheikh Ibn Uthumain and Sheikh Ibn Jubrain considered is permissible and not a Bidah!

Going through the book of Sheikh (Dr.) Al Arfaj you can realize that dozens of practices were labelled as Bidah but it has reference in the life of Sahabas (companions of the Holy Prophet).

Similarly greeting someone on a particular religious occasion is labelled as Bidah by some enthusiast Salafi persons. The religious occasion could be performing Hajj or on the event of Eid or performing any kind of worship.

It is argued that since performing any kind of worship like Hajj should be sincere to the God and not shared (and publicized) for gaining larger vocal market share so it is obvious that greeting someone who successfully performed this prayer is not but a Bidah.

On the other hand, greeting someone who performed a Hajj or a Umrah is nothing but our gratitude and respect to one of the greatest forms of worships in Islam. In no way, I guess, our happiness will result in malfunctioning the sincerity of his Hajj or Umrah. Similarly we greet brides and grooms on their Nikah which is actually a way of protecting themselves from sins like Zina and bringing up new generations of Muslims. Is it possible for any bride or groom to say that I'm not accepting any wishes or I'm performing Nikah in hiding so that you should not suspect my sincerity as a party of Nikah (in itself a form of obedience to the God)?!!.

There is no doubt that sharing minute and glorious details of the journey (in Hajj or Umrah) is not desirable. For example telling stories of how you helped poor persons in Makkah. Or how many Umrah were performed during 24 Hours.

Moreover there is a reference in the books of Ḥadīth where it was mentioned that the Holy Prophet greeted a young boy who was back from performing Hajj by saying "Allah may accept your Hajj, forgive your sins and reward you in what you spent". This was reported by Imam Tebrani (Volume 12 Page 292). The status of the Ḥadīth is Ḍa'īf.

It is also reported by Imam Zahir in Al Musanaf that Companions of the Holy Prophet used to greet each on the day of Eid by saying: Allah may accept our and your worships [of Ramadan]. The Status of the Asar is Hasan (i.e. quite

authentic). And no one can say that I'm more sensitive to Bidah than the Sahabs (Companions of the Holy Prophet).

Hence greeting anyone who performed any kind worship is no way a Bidah. Although it becomes the responsibility of the person who receives the good wishes that he/she ensures to stand up to the requirements of such a great worship.

The Night of 15th of Shaban

A Myth or Reality?

Muslims in Indian subcontinent react to 15th day of Shaban (the eight month of Arabic lunar calendar) in 2 very different & distinct ways. So you will find some of them who wait for celebrations of the day which are justified to be known as Muslim Carnival Day where lights are put on the graveyards and variety of foods are cooked with night long celebrations and sessions of story-book reciting.

On the other hand, you find a sect of young and enthusiastic Muslims who can be better termed as followers of Mr. Nasirudin Albani (1914 –1999) who try to prove that 15th of Shaban has no religious significance and no fasting should be observed for that particular day neither any worship nor any duwa should be made on this day.

Both parties look very charged in proving what they claim. So in settling this dust, I would like to take help of a recent article by Grand Mufti of Dubai Sheikh Ahmed Bin Abdul Aziz Al Haddad.

Firstly: Importance of the Night:

There is no doubt that the fifteenth night of Shaban is a very special night as per authentic Prophetic traditions. Hence it was reported by leading Companions of the Prophet ﷺ

عليه وسلم like Moaz Bin Jabal, Auf Bin Malik and Abu Moosa Al Ashari that Prophet said:

«يطلع الله إلى خلقه في ليلة النصف من شعبان فيغفر لجميع خلقه إلا لمشرك أو مشاحن» رواه البيهقي في الشعب، وابن أبي شيبة، وعبد الرزاق

which means that on the night of 15th Shabaan – Allah سبحانه gives special attention (through rewards and forgiveness) to the mankind except to Mushrik and those who are involved in disputes.

These traditions are narrated by Imam Ahmad, Imam Bazaz and Imam Baihaqee, to name a few.

Secondly: What to Do on this Night & Day?

Now since it is clear that 15th of Shaban is a great night so it is obvious and well-understood that devoting some time to Allah through worships would not be just preferable rather it should be the wish of every sane Muslim.

It is reported in authentic Ḥadīth that on this night Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم visited the graveyard and when Saiyda Aysha رضي الله عنهم followed him so he replied:

«إن الله تعالى ينزل ليلة النصف من شعبان إلى السماء الدنيا فيغفر لأكثر من عدد شعر غنم كلب» رواه أحمد والترمذي وابن ماجه وابن أبي شيبة والبيهقي،

Which means that on the night of 15th Shaban, Allah's special mercy comes down closer to Earth and it forgives for a lot of people.

Moreover prayers during the night of 15th of Shaban and fasting during the day is supported by a quotation of Sayanda Ali رضي الله عنه who said:

«إذا كانت ليلة النصف من شعبان، فقوموا ليلها وصوموا نهارها، فإن الله ينزل فيها لغروب الشمس إلى سماء الدنيا، فيقول: ألا من مستغفر لي فأغفر له ألا مسترزق فأرزقه ألا مبتلى فأعافيه ألا كذا ألا كذا، حتى يطلع الفجر»

which means that if its the night of 15th of Shaban then perform prayers in the night and observe fasting during the day because Allah's mercy comes closer to Earth and Allah says is there anyone seeking my forgiveness, so I forgive him? Is there anyone asking for Rizq so I give him Rizq?

Thirdly:

Throughout the ages, the Ummah observed 15th Night of Shaban as an important night to seek forgiveness from Allah and to seek Rizq and worldly rewards on this fateful night. If some people added some inventions like lighting the graveyards or preparing speciality cuisines, then that does not downgrade the importance of this night and or overrules the rewards of observing fasting during the daytime.

Which Ḥadīth

The Dilemma of "*Which Ḥadīth*"?!

A question which we hear by many common Muslims:
“*Which Ḥadīth (prophetic tradition) supports your point?*”

Such a question could imply any of the 2 things:

- I want to know the Ḥadīth so I will analyse its authenticity.
- The other way is you tell me name of the collection so I can judge whether Ḥadīth is acceptable or not?

Obliviously the first requirement is way beyond a common-man's capability. Study & analysis of Ḥadīth is a separate science which should not become a playground or reduced to Google searching tool left for personal assessment & individual judgments.

The second intention sounds very straight forward but prior to giving an answer or clarifying whether it is justified or not, I would like to give a brief historical introduction to “the science of Ḥadīth” and how it evolved as a concrete research based science for the past 1400 years.

Mission Quran:

As we are aware that during Prophet Muhammad's prophethood life (of around 23 years), spreading and

protecting the message of Quran was given the utmost importance. In the cities of Makkah & Madinah where poetry was the trend of speaking, it was a great revolution that Prophet Muhammad's companions learned the holy book of Quran, either completely or partially. There were around 14 companions entrusted with the job of writing down the holy verses. Post Prophet's departure to the heavenly world, two caliphs of Islam: Abu Bakar & Usman paid extra attention to collection of its verses in a book and unifying its dialect.

Political Expansion:

Now the first 200 years were extremely crucial for shaping the political stand of Muslims nation. Otherwise, Muslims as a new religious community would have been washed out by strong empires of Rome and Persia.

Juristic Developments:

On the other hand, juristic foundations were laid by companions of Prophet's companions and their followers. None of these authentic juristic conclusions were based on self-judgment. Rather all were derived from the Prophetic way of life. At that time followers & intelligent disciples and students of Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Awzaee, Imam Malik, Imam Shafae, Imam Ahmad Bin Hanbul established various Schools of Thought in Islamic jurisprudence.

As the political stability was essential for Muslims to safeguard their borders and territories, juristic frameworks were equally important for Muslims to protect them from any sort of theological anarchy. Over a period of 200 years of Islamic history, Muslims spread over a land which had

Atlantic on its east and China on its west. And Muslims have formulated 4 schools of Islamic law.

Change in Preferences:

Now, new issues started mushrooming in the Muslim world which was mainly related to Prophetic traditions. Some people tried to either fabricate facts about Prophet Muhammad's views & way of life. On the other hand, authenticity of some of the reporting lines from the Prophet Muhammad to the present people of 2nd century of Islamic history were either questioned or shown less dependency.

Fabrication in Ḥadīth:

The ones which were totally fabricated were classified as Muzoo (literally means – a subject placed by someone). Reciting or quoting any Muzoo Ḥadīth was not acceptable by all Muslim scholars since it is lie on the Prophet Muhammad.

Authentic Ḥadīth

Now come to authentic Ḥadīth. The Ḥadīth which fulfils all the requirements of authentic reporting from the Prophet Muhammad till the author/compiler of collection is known as Ṣaḥīḥ (literally means in Arabic – right). Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth implies that the text, meaning, context which was intended and delivered by the Prophet Muhammad, is the same as in front of our eyes in that particular collection.

The importance of collections of Imam Bukhārī and Imam Muslim is that they do not include ANY Ḥadīth which is not Ṣaḥīḥ.

Then comes Hasan (literally means in Arabic – good). In Hasan, the context is authentic but narration by some of the persons in the reporting line might not be very accurate. The

collection of Imam Tirmidhī comprises of many Hasan Ḥadīth.

Then comes Ḍaʿīf (literally means in Arabic – weak). This category comprises of all Ḥadīth which are reported by less authentic people or the context has some ambiguities and conflict with other Ṣaḥīḥ & Hasan Ḥadīth then it will be known as Ḍaʿīf.

Referring to Ḍaʿīf Ḥadīth:

Now relying on Ḍaʿīf Ḥadīth is a two-fold issue. Ḍaʿīf Ḥadīth cannot be used in all matters pertaining to core Islamic beliefs and any ruling which implies obligating some act which is not at all supported by any Quranic verse or Ḥadīth.

On the other hand, Ḍaʿīf Ḥadīth can be narrated in encouraging people to indulge in more of good deeds and avoid bad ones. However, it is necessary in that situation that Ḍaʿīf Ḥadīth is supported by another Ṣaḥīḥ or at least a Hasan Ḥadīth. For example, Ḍaʿīf Ḥadīth about performing regular prayers in the Masjid can be quoted since there are plenty of Ḥadīths on prayers in masjid. This view is taken by one of the greatest Ḥadīth scholars of all time – Imam Bukhārī!!!

The logic is very simple Ḍaʿīf Ḥadīth is still a Ḥadīth and has some connection & relevance to Prophet Muhammad's divine teachings.

Ḥadīth from a Different Source

Now coming to the question that why when someone narrates a Ḥadīth which is not in the 6 collections of Ḥadīth then still the point could be taken for consideration? The reason is very simple:

Not all Ḥadīth & teachings narrated by Prophet Muhammad are exclusively collected in these 6 books. There are other books like Musnad Imam Ahmad, Masnad Baihaqi, Musnad Ibn Habbān etc.

Secondly it is not necessary that if the Ḥadīth is narrated in any of 4 collections (other than Bukhrai & Muslim) then it ought to be a Ḥasan or Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth. Some Ḥadīth mentioned in Ibn Majah are Ḍaʿīf or Muzoo as well.

And on the other hand, it is not necessary that if a Ḥadīth is not mentioned in these collections then it is a fabricated one. The best example is Mustadrak of Imam Hakim Nishapuri. The book collected all the Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth which Imām Bukhārī & Muslim did not include in their collections. Mustakdrak is widely referred by Hanafi scholars in defending their rulings.

So Next time if someone asks you “Which Ḥadīth?”, remember it’s not a piece of cake left for drawing-room discussions! And a Ḍaʿīf Ḥadīth does not imply that its fly which should be taken it from your cake!!!

Making a Vow

Rulings about Nadhr or Mannat

Muslims in the Indian subcontinent randomly hear someone saying that if my son gets well then I'm going to donate daily meal for 10 poor men. This is known in Hindi as *mannat*.

Post migration of many Indian Muslims to Saudi Arabia, many Islamic rulings were classified as either Bidaat or Sherk.

Similarly, Nadhar (or making a vow or commitment to God) was classified as impermissible and we were told to refrain from committing such acts of donation where realization of the vow depends on happening of a future event.

So it is very important to understand the major rulings of Nadhar or Islamic commitment prior to giving a conclusive judgment to other fellow Desi brothers and sisters.

First of all what is a Nadhr?

This was beautifully defined by Sheikh Nuh Haa Meem Keller as:

“It is legally defined as making obligatory some act of worship that was not originally obligatory in Sacred Law, such as a supererogatory (Nafel) prayer or fast, and the like.”

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In the Holy Quran, Verse No. 7 of Surrah Insan described the Righteous people who will enter heaven as *“they fulfil their vows; they fear a day of widespread woes.”*

Similarly, it is mentioned in the Holy Book that Mother of Marryum committed to the God that if she gets a baby boy then they she will devote him to religious services.

So, we need to understand what can be the subject of Islamic vow?

As per Sheikh Khalid Saifullah Rehmani the following conditions are must in any Islamic vow:

- 1- It should be possible to fulfil this commitment. For example, if a person commits to fast during the night than this is invalid. Similarly, if a person commits to fast during the last month so this will be equally invalid.
- 2- It should be a righteous act of getting closer to the God. Hence a commitment to do a sin is not permissible. For example, someone cannot make a vow to drink. Also, someone cannot make a vow to have food or breathe air! Since these are not exclusive acts of worship.
- 3- It should be in the exclusive form of worships like prayer, fasting, Hajj, Umrah, Etikaf, donation or scarifies. For example, a commitment to visit a patient is considered invalid or to touch the Holy Book of Quran is invalid since this is not an exclusive form of worship.
- 4- The subject of Islamic vow should be in the ownership and custody of the person making a vow. Hence you cannot

make a commitment that you will donate a house which is still not owned by you.

- 5- The subject of Islamic vow should be not obligatory. Hence you cannot commit to pray five times obligatory prayers, fast during Ramdan or pay your Zakat on annual basis. Since these acts of worship are obligatory.

The vows are of two types: conditional or non-conditional. Now that makes the difference.

In case it was a non-conditional vow than you would say: “I commit to pray 200 Nafel (non-obligatory) prayers.

This kind of commitment has no Shari’a objection by the majority of scholars.

However the difference of opinion arises in the conditional vow where you say “*if I succeed in my exams then I will donate \$ 500*”. Or “*if I catch my flight then I will perform Umrah*”.

As per Ḥanafī jurists, it is permissible to make either conditional or unconditional vows provided it is for a permissible act as given above.

Maliki jurists differentiate their opinions. Jurists like Sh. Durdīr, Sh. Baji and Sh. Ibn Shās consider it *makrūh* (reprehensible). However, Ibn Rushd (i.e. Averroes) considers conditional vow as permissible provided it does not have to be performed on recurring basis. For example, a commitment to fast on every Monday!

Ḥanbalī jurists consider conditional vow as *makrūh tanzīhī* (preferably reprehensible).

Majority of Shāfi‘ī jurists consider conditional vow as Makroh (reprehensible) but Imam Nawawi (author of

Riyadh Al Saleheen) and Imam Ghazali consider it permissible.

In a nutshell:

it is evident those jurists who objected on making a conditional vow was based on assumption that we should not consider these acts responsible (or cause) for what comes out in our favor. Hence the God makes our sick better without the need of our conditional vows or commitments to pray or donate.

However, other jurists feel that these vows are like Waseela (a way to get closer to God) which is permissible in line with Bukhārī Ḥadīth where 3 men caught up in a cave and then make prayers to the God by referring (or relying) on their old good deeds. Hence if making Waseela of old good deeds is permissible then making a conditional vow for a future act of worship would be indeed acceptable.

Hence it is not Sherk or Bidaat to make a conditional vow since sound Islamic juristic rulings support the same provided conditions listed above are considered.

Naqsh-e-Aleemi

Collection of My Abba's Writings

In February 2002, my father Janab Aleem Ahmad Siddiqi passed away in Jeddah. Besides being a person who cared for his relatives, friends and raising his kids, he was a genius when it comes to Urdu literature. Unfortunately, he was caught up in managing different tasks of life and could not focus more on writing and serving Urdu.

However, upon his demise, his family members decided to collect and publish whatever he left behind. Hence, in 2004, I started the task of arranging and editing his Urdu writings which were in the form of articles and letters published in magazines and newspapers, poetry recited in public gatherings, or private letters sent to three of his sons.

This effort resulted in a tiny book of 192 pages which consisted mainly of 4 sections. The first section draws a biographic sketch highlighting his family background and milestones of his life. The second section presents his articles under different topics and headings. It also includes a subsection of his letters published in Urdu News; an Urdu daily published from Jeddah. The third section presents his private letters sent to my brother (Eng. Abdullah Siddiqi) and me. The fourth section presents my father's poetic contribution. Lastly, the fifth section has articles and letters in memory of my father by his relatives and friends.

While dedicating the book, I could not find anyone more apt than the renowned Urdu critic Janab Ghulam Ahmad Furqat Kakorwi (1914-1973) (father of Tariq Alvi, Tayyab Alavi, Ahmad Alvi, Suboohi Khalidi, Taj Alvi). Janab Furqat Sb. was my father's brother-in-law being the husband of his eldest cousin. But moreover, he was my father's mentor in his early days of developing an interest in Urdu.

The preface of the book was written by Mulana Muhammad Rabay Hasni Nadwai Sb which is reflective of my grandfather's association with Hasani family, besides my father's status as a knowledge lover with a pure taste of Urdu literature.

The book was self-published, and I am left with 2 copies! Hence, decided to upload its PDF on Archive.com.

Enjoy reading!

<https://archive.org/details/naqsh-e-aleemi-urdu>

A United India

Letter to Dr. Toorjo Ghosr

My letter to Dr. Toorjo Ghosr the Man who saved India & Wharton from shame of listening to a right-wing leader as a reformist.

"Dear Toorjo Mian,

Hope you are doing well.

Just read about change in plan by Wharton School of Business in not inviting right-wing leader to deliver a keynote address at one of world's most prestigious B-Schools. Indiatimes was generous and informative enough to mention your efforts in getting this happen. I was overwhelmed and a bit more confident on humanity and just thought it is a good time to say THANK YOU.

What compelled me to write an appreciation letter to your courage and kind efforts was simply my admiration to Gandhiji and Mulana Azad. When Indian subcontinent was burning with riots at that time, Azad was successful to show the innocent Indians (not just Muslims) the right path of unity and humanity. Post-Independence, Mulana Azad was appointed India's first Minister of Education. In one of the parliament sessions, Lalji Tandon (a hardcore

Hindutwa politician) objected on grants approved by Mulana Azad for Dar Al Musanifeen (one of the world's most prestigious research institutes on Islamic history which is located in Azamgarh - UP). The next day, Mulana Azad stood in front of the statesmen and gave records of donations and grants given to Hindu Mutts which were personally supervised by Mulana Azad for research projects on ancient history of India. And towards the end, Mulana faced Lalji and said "because of people with limited thinking like you, India was divided!" This stands as a universal fact that people with limited mindset and vested interests in dividing the mankind always had the first chance to torn apart the social fabric but those who resisted them were part of the History. And I wish people like you who think beyond boundaries, religion, cast, region should be of those fortunate ones.

Wish you luck in your academic endeavours and social uprising.

Regards,

A Human-being,

Yousuf Siddiqi"

In 5 minutes got this response from him

"Thanks, Yousuf. Truly wonderful to hear from you. Wish more people thought like this! Take care!

Toorjo"

11th September

Memories

17 years back, I was a first year B. Com. student at Ness Wadia College in Pune (India).

11th September 2001 was a normal Tuesday for me. I went to college and had a normal dull day of commerce academia. I returned to my apartment at KS Kedari Road to take rest.

Since I did not have any entertainment at my unit so used to go to my uncle's house at Saifi Street near MG Road. I reached after Maghrib and switched on the TV to find news about air crash at World Trade Center. The news was so huge that even music channels like MTV flashed this news. For a moment I didn't figure out where does WTC exists. Within minutes I saw the next airplane crashing into the second tower. It was shocking and unbelievable!

The next day I purchased all the English newspapers. I remember the tragic photo of someone falling off the WTC which was turning into ashes and flames. Times of India had editorial column on the front page.

I reached the juice shop where everyone was talking about the tragic event. However, the strangest comment came from

a passer-by who suspected Japan of plotting the same to take revenge of Hiroshima!

The life of a young Muslim totally changed after 11th September. Although I was an Indian living thousands of miles away from the episode centre but as a member of the global village I was supposed to prove again and again that Islam does not support terrorism. Since I knew Arabic, so I had an extra duty to share a theological side of my claim.

11th September will be remembered as game changer when American Muslims, specially, and global Muslims were thrown into social isolation for the coming few decades.

From Sydney to Peshawar

Few months back, Jeddah hosted a world conference on how to combat the danger of Daaish (the Arabized name of IS). At that time, Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid (Ruler of Dubai) wrote a thought-provoking editorial in an Arabic daily. He highlighted how Daaish was able to unite all the countries and forces of a civilized world to fight a radical and self-centred form of religion and how the world forgot its differences to save the humanity.

The recent incident of Sydney proved that Australia has 2 fractions of people. One who are thinking that by killing or harassing (in metros and buses) innocent civilians they can shake the political will of a powerful nation like Australia. On the other hand, those who got united to fight back any kind of radical religion or narrow-minded nationalism. It was a bright day for humanity to observe that the second group is larger in number although they are disarmed but perfectly all right to terrorize those who want to terrorize and kill innocent civilians.

Yesterday's Peshawar Tragedy divided The entire world population into Human beings and Taliban. The posts on FB were not limited to India and Pakistan. In fact some international sports celebrities tried to express their anger against such atrocities. Imran Khan who didn't stop chanting

Go Nawaz Go, was seen sitting next to Nawaz Sharif and issued a joint statement as a political front of a democratic and civilized world. The message was loud and clear. We could have hard core political differences, but we are not Taliban. On yesterday's Indian TV shows, officials from Indian Army were seeing giving condolences to officials from Pakistani Army. A rare of the rarest scene for 2 nations who fought 4 wars and have continuous trouble on the line of border. This was not ended here. One minute silence was observed in Indian schools on the directives of Indian PM. The message was strong to Taliban that despite our differences we remain human beings and you are Taliban.

I am sure the loss suffered by families of Sydney n Peshawar victims is indispensable, but I am confident that all forms of radical religion (especially the Muslim version) have received a huge strategic set back to see their target is not innocent cafe goers of Australia or little angels of Pakistani schools, rather they face a group of 6 Billion human beings. And I am sure they will soon be terrified and terrorized by the thought of itself.

A Human being

Paris Terror Attack

Demystify Islamic Criminal Laws

Yesterday the world witnessed another tragic incident of terror in the world's most poetic and romantic city: Paris. Although hearing news of terror attacks became an expected habit over a span of 3-4 weeks. Rather we can call it as Broken Lives than Breaking News. Unfortunately, attackers were Muslims who believed in a radicalized version of Islam. Despite the calls on social media to disregard the attackers as Muslims, we must admit with utmost shame and humiliation that we (as practising and orthodox Muslims) share basic religious beliefs with these low-graded individuals who brought shame to the entire Muslims.

However, what made this attack a little bit different than any other tragic attack was the background of the victims. 12 people murdered by the attackers. One of the persons was Stephane Charbonnier aka Charb who was in the news for the last many years for making derogatory cartoons about the Holy Prophet Muhammad and Jews. I firmly believe that as all Muslims cannot be labelled as Qaida or Daesh, similarly all French people cannot be considered thinking like Charb. In this post, I'm not discussing the extent of freedom of expressions and its implications. Rather I would like to

present Islamic juristic view about treating cases of acts of Charb.

No civilized and cultured person can deny that what Charb contributed to journalistic media was far from being productive and positive. As per Islamic laws, the respect of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon HIM) cannot be compromised in any circumstances. If a Muslim uses derogatory words, seriously or jokingly, against the Prophet Muhammad then he is considered out of the Muslim community. During the life of the Prophet, Muhammad things would have been adjustable through seeking personal forgiveness of the Prophet himself. As it happened with the poet Kaab Bin Zuhair. Now when Prophet is no longer with us, it is a serious non-forgivable crime as per Islamic criminal law. Rulings related to this crime are addressed under the Laws of Apostasy (in Arabic known as Ridda).

An accused (who is also called an apostate) should have been in his full mind while committing the crime of disrespecting the Prophet Muhammad. Hence a person who lost his mind or a person (as highlighted by Hanafi jurists) who is under the influence of alcohol cannot be trailed under the laws of apostasy. Secondly, the accused should have attained the age of adulthood at the time of committing this crime. As per Imam Shāfi'ī and Abu Yousuf if a small kid (who can differentiate) utters words of disrespect against the Prophet Muhammad then he would not be subjected to the rulings of Apostasy. Thirdly, the accused should have committed the crime by his own will and not under undue influence. It is very clear that if Charb should have been trailed for apostasy then he would have been classified as a criminal based on all the 3 main conditions as given above.

As per the Law of Apostasy, if the crime was proven then the accused should be given capital punishment provided, he is an adult and sane. However, as per Hanafi jurists, the accused should be offered a 3-day chance for seeking forgiveness from his crime. And this opinion is based on an incident from the life of Caliph Umar where he disowned the decision taken by Muslim troops in killing an accused of the Law of Apostasy without giving him 3 days to seek forgiveness. It is very that Charb did not have any regret for what he has done. In fact, he simply said that he follows French Laws and not Quranic laws.

Now the main question arises...if it was clear that Charb was a criminal as per Islamic criminal laws and he should have been subjected to most severe punishments...then...

WHO SHOULD HAVE EXECUTED THIS PUNISHMENT?!!

As per the Islamic criminal law, executing any kind of criminal punishment is purely the right of the ruler of the Muslims i.e. the court of law and official bodies appointed to maintain the law and order. This comes in line with avoiding any state of social or legal anarchy which can leave the people living in a state of constant fear of being targeted as apostate without proper trails and where arm-twisting can be experienced at the corner of every street. Unfortunately, in some of the Muslim dominated countries, it became a normal practice to hear about the use of power by the masses in punishing the accused under the laws of apostasy.

Now when the crime of disrespecting the Prophet was committed in France which is no doubt classified as Dar as Sulh (a place which is neither under Muslim law nor at war

with Muslims) then execution of punishments by individual Muslims is simply a mockery of Islam's justice and its message of equality.

I am sure that French society would be able to come out of this tragic incident as a strong and united civilized family which will disassociate act of a bunch of radicalized Muslims from the peaceful 5 million Muslims. However, I thought it was important to highlight that despite our unlikeness to acts committed by Charb but we as practising Muslims cannot consider his murder as justified under the means of Islamic laws which the murders claim to defend and implement.

I wish those who have misgivings about Islamic law and perceived it to be as cruel as acts of Al Qaeda and Daesh will get a chance to see the real picture of Islamic law without relying on passionate slogans.

Discovering ISIS in Muslim Homes

There is no doubt that recent terror attacks at Istanbul's international airport left most of the human beings shattered and saddened.

One of the most common comments coming from Muslim bloggers on social media channels was How come claiming to be a Muslim fighter, ISIS can kill innocent Muslims in the Holy month of Ramdan?

A valid question. Although the answer is very simple! The brain-washed terrorist does not consider victims and even the majority of Muslims as Muslims. Since we, as Muslims, do not kill innocent non-Muslims, so we are, as per ISIS, worse than non-believers.

Strange enough. Right?!

However, the root cause of this polluted thinking lies within the methodology followed by "right-wing Muslims" although they are small but were able to influence a group of young and enthusiast Muslims who were ashamed of their pasts where they were involved in drugs or even homosexuality.

Do not switch on any TV debate telecasted on CNN, BBC, Fox News. Just look closely at your family members. You

need to figure out the young Muslims who are followers (or I call them victims) of right-wing Muslims. They would consider 99% of the Muslim Ummah on the wrong path. Not that only, they even consider the majority of the Ummah will go anywhere except Jannah or even Aaraf.

The theological and juristic differences and variances were ever existing since the noble message of Islam was revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad Peace be Upon Him. You will find one companion endorsing one opinion, but on the other hand, someone else is happy to endorse a different interpretation.

Right-wing Muslims made a point to exaggerate small juristic differences and focus on them as the subject of every fight and argument.

Result?

Over a period of 3-4 years, you may have a generation that is theologically intolerant and juristically ignorant of others' opinions and ways of interpretations. For them, Islam is what is passed to them by one scholar. It will be a grave sin as Shirk if someone dares to respect (not even follow) others' opinions or interpretations. Finally, you will have a raw-material ready to be used by one of the most notorious and spreading terror group in the history of mankind.

What was more tragic and painful that these attacks were held in Turkey, which is the land of great and noble people like Jalaludin Rumi and Badi Zaman Norasi.

May God save Mankind from the evil of mankind. Aameen

Crises of Refugees

Eco-political Gains through Forced Demographic Changes

For the past 5 years, common man, all over the world, is forced to hear and experience one of the most brutal pieces of news from Syria and Iraq. Among thousands and thousands of stories, I felt two stories were the most disgusting and touching one.

One was of Julian - a young Yazidi woman who was subjected to brutal sex slavery and that even by the followers of a religion who read Quranic verses like: "*On the day of judgement - the infant will be asked why you were killed?*" The followers of a religion who claim that it is the only justice driven set of believes and practices which give rights in the inheritance to female members of the family. I feel ashamed to say that doers of such brutal crimes against women were followers of Islam. This was disgusting for me.

Secondly, I was touched to hear the story of Alan a Kurdish boy who was found floating on the Turkish sea after going deep in his eternal sleep. It seems that the merciless political system in Syria and Daesh did not allow his parents to stay peacefully in their homeland and throw them to the sea. This was extremely painful to hear.

It is a fact that once we gather small pieces of news, we get to understand the current political scenario. However, when we gather a larger number of political scenarios, we get to know how this will shape the larger canvas of human history. Every piece of news (even if it's significant as Hiroshima Nuclear Attack) cannot be classified as a history unless and until we gather a bigger number of scenarios over a period of a decade. I believe a time unit in analysing human history is at least 60 years!

The failed experiment of "Arab Spring" in Syria has started showing that the game-plan seems to be more complicated than simply correlating it with a wave of political protests which started from Tunisia when Mohamed Bouazizi a vegetable toddler burnt himself alive.

Analysing the current political scenario, we can see that 9 million Syrians have left their homeland and searching for a safe haven in Sweden, Germany, Hungary, USA, UK, Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. This resulted in mankind's biggest mass migration after the Second World War. The Result? A large number of Syrians being categorized as homeless and taken away from their home country which is often referred to as the "Blessed Land" as per Islamic believes. But on the other hand, European governments are welcoming them. It is a great act of humanity.

Really?

I don't think so. Europe never imagined in their wildest dream to have thousands of Syrians leaving their Blessed Lands and moving to a land which has all the disadvantages like low religious tolerance, extreme weather conditions, lack of economic opportunities. However in reality, Syrians (who

are classified as Arab world's best minds and having the most sophisticated skill-sets) are fleeing to Europe being marketed as "Earthly-Heaven" welcomed by Mama Markell. Refuge in Europe is not for free. I guess that's the ROI (Return on Investment) which is expected from a European Banker. For example, Syrian refugees are forced to learn Swedish language and stay in the country for, at least, 5 years and ensure to be economically productive irrespective of their gender, age, working experiments etc. Just imagine being a Muslim Syrian refugee living in Europe who will not dare to even raise his voice for any injustice done to him. Why? The answer is simply logical, the scary images of going back to Syria (where Daesh beheads, or militia gasifiers living human-beings). Unfortunately, this is not a hypothetical example which may or may not occur after a few years. This is a reality! I was told in many instances police in Germany started treating Germans of Arab origins as "Guilty by Default". Do you have an issue? Go to Hill on Earth! This kind of forced demographic change has achieved larger goals of socio-economic slavery!

In return to receiving Muslim refugees, Europe is dumping its social garbage in the lands of Iraq and Syria as Daesh fighters. It was certain that such people with a high degree of social misconceptions and imbalances (which they achieved while raising up in an intolerant Europe) would cause a huge danger to any human society (including Europe, Australia or USA). They are happy, foolishly, to be living in a land of Caliph which is hated by any human-being.

Now coming back to Syria. Millions have left the country, thousands of Russians and Iranians have filled the gap. Walking on Damascus streets you can hear Persian songs.

Everyone wondered how Syria had 70% Sunni population but was ruled by a sect which represented 18% of the total population. I presume things won't be the same in the future course of time! Through forced demographic changes, where foreigners have purchased lands and properties from Sunni Muslims through distress sale, Damascus and Tartus (a strategic sea-port) will be controlled by foreign Shias and loyal Russian soldiers. The Sunni population will be either secluded to rural areas or sent for socio-economic slavery in the Heavenly Banks of Europe. In a couple of years, anyone would look at Sunni Muslims in Syria as a social species which could be large in number but politically insignificant and impotent.

This act of forceful demographic change reminds of Shah Tahmasab (1514-1576), the host of Mughal King Humayun in his 11 years' exile, who forced multi-religion Iran to become a 100% Shia kingdom. Similarly, in 1492, Christian kings of Spain forced local Muslims to accept Christianity or face capital punishments.

Ignorant people often criticize Aurangzeb or Wahabi rulers of Saudi for their religious intolerance. But the history has not given us a single proof that their kingdoms experienced a forceful demographic change due to differences in religious or sectarian inclinations. Very people know that a small pocket of native Saudi Jews was living in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia up to 2006. They never experienced any injustice or forced to fit themselves in a bigger socio-political system of Sunni Muslims.

My Wish? I wished if Europe and the Syrian Regime have learned a lesson or two from success history of empires in India and the Middle East.

In the 8th Century, Madinah was the centre of the Islamic Empire controlling lands of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Egypt. There were no forced demographic changes due to religious difference. People of Madinah did not force their lifestyle on the conquered lands. Even no one was forced to learn Arabic. In fact, the Caliph Umar even permitted to recite Prayers in Persian for newly converted Muslims by the time they learnt Arabic. Names like Javed were as accepted as Khalid.

On the other hand, Mogul kings ruled India while practising religion of a small minority. But not a single incident is reported of forceful mass-conversion or forcing Hindus to leave their properties in favour of Muslim settlements. In the 20th Century, Dr Manmohan Singh a practising Sikh has governed the political system of India for more than 10 years as Prime Minister of the country. Indeed, Europe needs to learn the essence of socio-political freedom and not to be scared of Europe being converted to Muslim populated lands as claimed by a scared Hungarian Prime Minister.

Shared-psyche in Indian Muslims

Burari Mass-suicide

Recently news came that an Indian family in Delhi's Burari area committed mass-suicide. Initially, some thought it could be a case of murder. And then it was thought to be an act of fake godman. Then finally investigation revealed that the young boy of the family convinced the entire family to commit suicide to achieve salvation and then come back to this world. The boy (in his mid-30s) was a psychic case. Sadly, he went one level ahead and spread his condition upon other family members and they become a case of Shared Psyche!

I was discussing the matter with one of the Muslim friends who was not convinced to believe in the story at face value. We, Indians, find it difficult to believe in psychological disorders. How come the same got spread out?! Indians are bad in treating emotional tragedies which eventually lead to psychological disasters.

My grandfather (Dr Azim Ahmad Siddiqi) was a known physician in old Lucknow. His practices were successful and he earned very well. One day he suffered brain stroke. Naturally, he could not devote much of his time to practice and he badly suffered on the financial front. Later on, he had

his second stroke and was almost bedridden. My grandma could not believe the tragedies of life. She had a firm believe that my grandfather was a victim of witchcraft. She was also convinced that a "woman" might be behind this. One time a Baba asked him to get one sheep which vomited in green. This made her firm in her believe! This kind of psyche was not limited to her. In fact, all her loving sons and daughters shared the same psyche. Interestingly, when her sons and daughters got married then this psyche got broken down! And we started looking into things more reasonably without losing faith in spirituality as practising Muslims. In India, Millions of Muslims stop thinking once they hand over their fate to an *Aamil* or a Baba! Our faith in witchcraft is stronger than our faith in God who can protect us from such wrongdoings.

With news of suicide coming from around the world, its high time for us to understand the issues of psychological disorder. And one of them is fear of "Jadoo" for Indian Muslims. And it would be the benefit of all the people to consider visiting a counsellor, psychologist or even a psychiatrist to live a magical life.

The Syndrome of Kya Zarorut?

Days of month of December are celebrated by majority of north half of Earth's population as fun and happy days. The reasons for celebrations are not confined to religious festivals. Rather the weather is extremely cold and most of us enjoy chilling winter nights.

Having said that - December of 2012 and 2014 was a shameful scar on Indian society.

In December 2012, a gruesome gang rape happened on Delhi streets. One of the victims (the raped girl) passed away in Singapore after suffering multiple organ failure.

In December 2014, an innocent girl in her late 20s was raped by the taxi driver just few miles away from her destination.

In 2012, the Government took steps to protect women from sexual harassment through passing one of world's best acts on this matter. In 2014, the Government decided to ban the company on which Delhi people depended heavily!

The common feature in both the shameful events was the syndrome of "Kya Zarorut?!" which literally means "what's the need?"

In 2012, I was sharing my anger with a person who was a student in Delhi few decades back. The first response was

what was the need for rape victim to roam freely on Delhi streets at 10 PM. I didn't get a chance to discuss with him the 2014 rape incident otherwise he would have suggested the same remedy of Kya Zarorut for not going out for dinner after 4PM!

This syndrome is pushing us to a life where we accept injustice in all of its kind and ugly shapes to be the fact of our life. It is like a resident of Faizabad (a city in Northern India) told me that due to increase number of monkeys in the city, it seems that Human beings live in cemented cages and giving away the cities to monkeys with utmost freedom.

We, as Indians or East Asia, can't claim to be people with great values if women of our society do not have freedom to have outdoor dinners and come home safely with no fear of, even, verbal harassment.

Hope to see an India where Kya Zarorut is asked to know why we are discussing rape laws in a country free from sexual harassment. At that time, we can think of starting our path towards Women Empowerment and I will say: WE Are GREAT.

Following Islam by Reverts

A Universal Right or a Community Practice

Spreading of an idea (whether simple or complex) depends on its attractiveness to the new takers. And once followers adhere to these principles and believe then very soon the gen-next believes on the same idea more confidently and this believes passes on.

The spread of Islam is not an exception to this general rule. The earlier followers of the Prophet Muhammad found the message of God very attractive in many aspects.

What made this simple message spread like fire in the forest was its universal appeal. The Prophet Muhammad was titled as Mercy of All Worlds. The scope of his teachings was not limited to human-beings. In fact, followers and dear companions of the Prophet were taught by him to live nicely with wife and treat subordinates well, have mercy on animals and not to waste water (even if the user is in the mid of river).

The universality of Islamic teachings amazed the World during the 7th and 8th Centuries where:

India was struggling with cast-system.

Lands of Persia suffered atrocities of the ruling family.

Romans were under-burden of unfair taxes.

No one can say that Islamic teachings were not universal in their appeal. In a short span of time (not exceeding few decades) from the death of Prophet Muhammad, the non-Muslim population from Spain, India, China, Syria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Sudan embraced Islam and very comfortably became an integral part of the original Arab Muslim society. They even had guts to ask for their rights and remind sons of Companions about their obligations in maintaining the Muslim society and implementing the well of God.

And it's a proven historical fact that within a short span of time, non-Arab Muslims did not just embrace Islam but their siblings and sons & grandsons attained the highest level of Islamic scholarly and even were known as Imam (a religious leader or guru). The best example could be Imam Abu Hanifa who is till date known as Imam Al Azam (the Great Imams). Abu Hanifa laid the foundation of Hanafi School of jurisprudence and nowadays his followers constitute the largest number of Muslims all over the World.

Now compare the existing offering of the Islamic faith by its followers and you will certainly agree that its universal shine, if not lost then, has faded up to a large extent. What is meant by universality is where newcomers find themselves comfortable in practising what the "senior batch" is used to do. Moreover, there should be no limitations to attain a higher level if you were a later-comer to this divine universe of faith and unity.

To clarify my stand further I would like to mention some incidents given by Muslim scholars as an example of our current mindset.

In the early 1930s, Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar announced that he is looking for the right choice of religion to follow and practice. Being a leader of hundreds of thousands of people, it was seen as a rare opportunity by various religious preachers. From Lucknow, Dr Abdul Ali Hasani (Ex-Rector of Nadwaul Ulama) decided to send his younger brother – Maulana Ali Mian (1913-1999) to meet Dr Ambedkar in Mumbai. When Maulana Ali Mian was leaving Lucknow then Sheikh Khalil Arab (Ali Mian's childhood mentor) came forward and said in a very emotional tune that "If Ambedkar asks you: who will marry me if I become a Muslim? Then tell him about a person from a reputed Syed Family (i.e. direct descendants of Prophet Muhammad) is ready to marry his daughter to you." By that Sheikh Khalil Arab meant himself. Sheikh Khalil Arab belonged to one of the most respected Syed families of Yemen and his grandfather was Sheikh Muhsen Yamani who was a known scholar in Hadith and Islamic studies. This incident shows the universal approach which was practised by true followers and lovers of Islam.

Maulana Saeed Ahmad Palanpuri (the Grand Mufti of Deoband) mentioned in his speeches one incident that a college-going boy embraced Islam. His fellow Muslim batch-mates were happy to welcome him to their religion. Very soon the boy grew a beard. Now, this was an alarming sign for "Religiously Senior Batch" or "By-birth" Muslims. They tried to convince him that in Islam keeping beard is merely Sunnat (act or habit of Prophet Muhammad). It is not Fard (obligatory) or Wajib (secondary obligatory) or Mustahab. The boy very innocently replied that he doesn't understand the juristic rhetoric. He simply knows that Prophet Muhammad had a beard so he wants to follow him. Actually, it was the fear of not practising Islam by By-birth Muslims

which ended the short-lived happiness of welcoming him to their religion.

In another interesting incident – I was told that one of my cousins living near Lucknow got her son married to a newly converted Muslim girl. The girl proved herself to be a good daughter in law and wife besides being a practising Muslim. Once she attended a wedding, over their old ladies surrounded her and started asking her interrogatingly if she “regularly and actually” prays 5 times a day. Since it is very common for young Muslim boys to marry a non-Muslim girl and then have a Nikah ceremony to please ailing Muslim parents with a new Muslim name (usually Ayesha) given to a 10-minutes Muslims girl. So obviously, old ladies in that gathering had the curiosity to test the degree of faith practised by my sister-in-law. She replied calmly: “Yes, I do pray 5 times but have you people ever asked whether your son or my husband is praying or not. Just because I became a new Muslim, so everyone is eager to check my religiousness.”

The above incidents clearly show that nowadays if you are born into a Muslim family then you are considered as royal in terms of practising religion. Rather you could be religiously as corrupt as any Indian politician. You might be not knowing the very basics of Islamic believes, forget about praying 5 times regularly. And you could be questioning the religious purity of a newly converted Muslim. This turned the entire message of Islam into a community practice rather than a universal right for everyone.

History proves that Islam was spread when original flag-bearers thought beyond these factors. And descendants of newly converts became rulers and great Islamic scholars.

So, we need to think Universal since we have a Universal Message with us.